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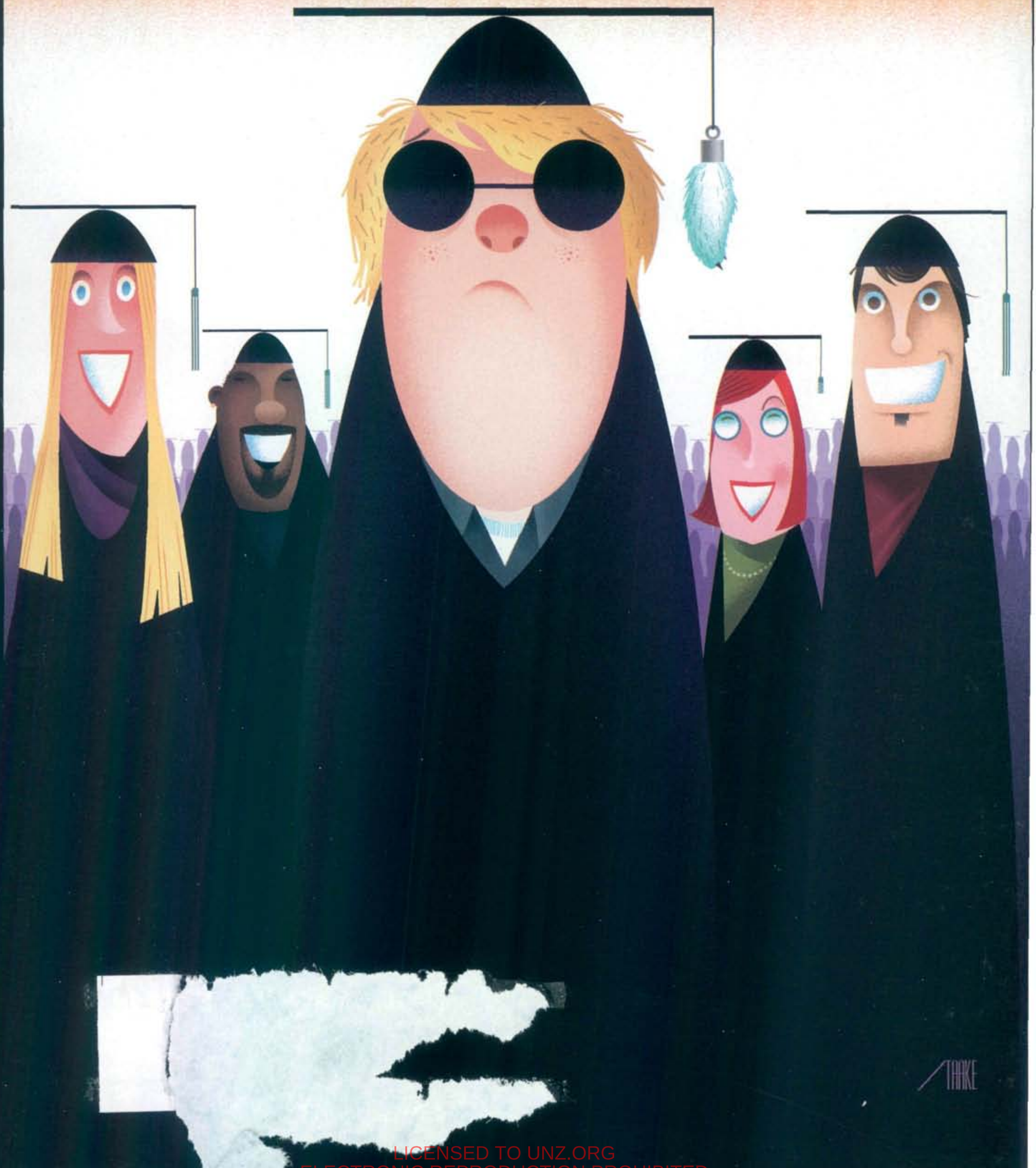
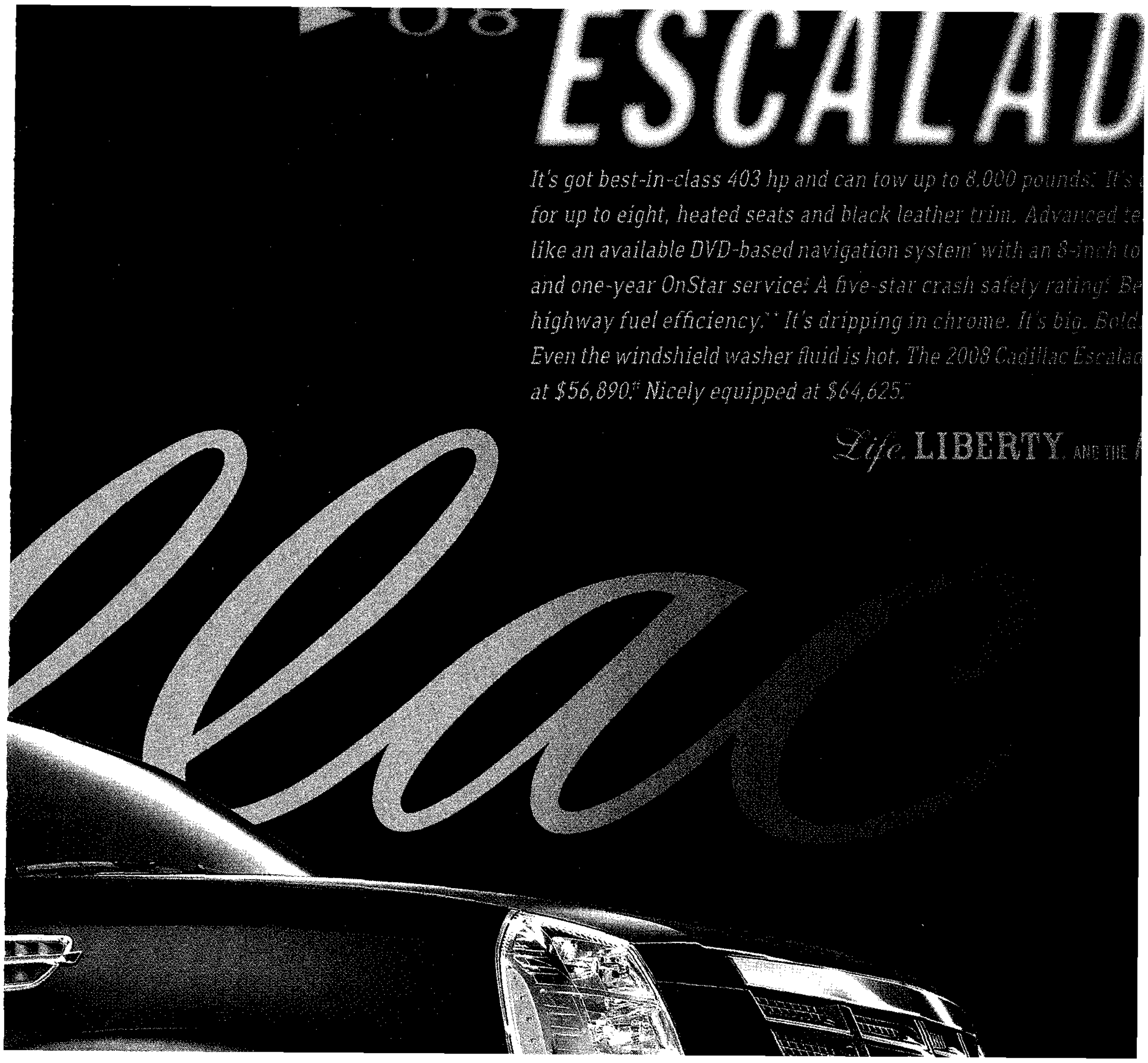
JUNE 2, 2008





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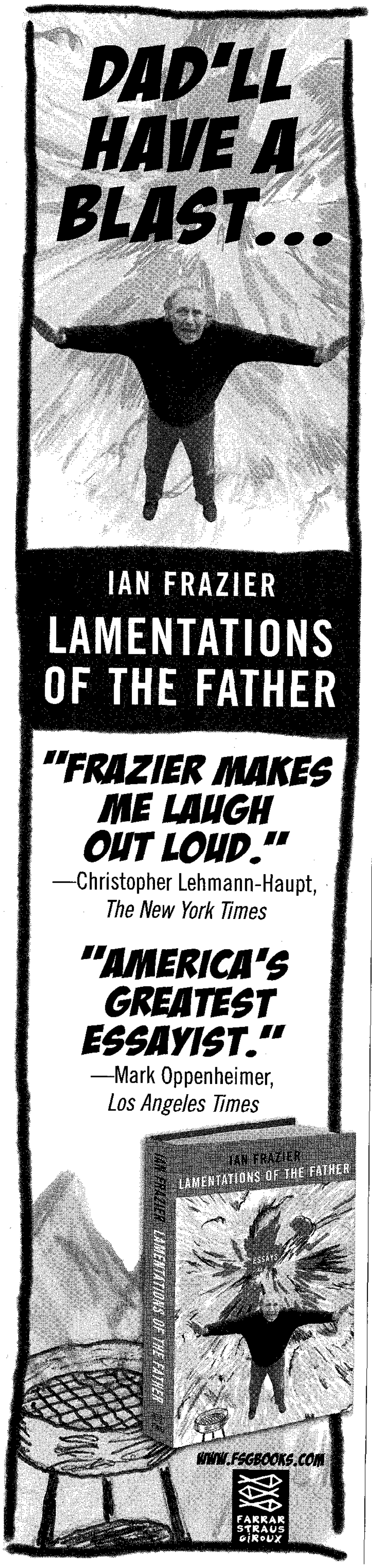
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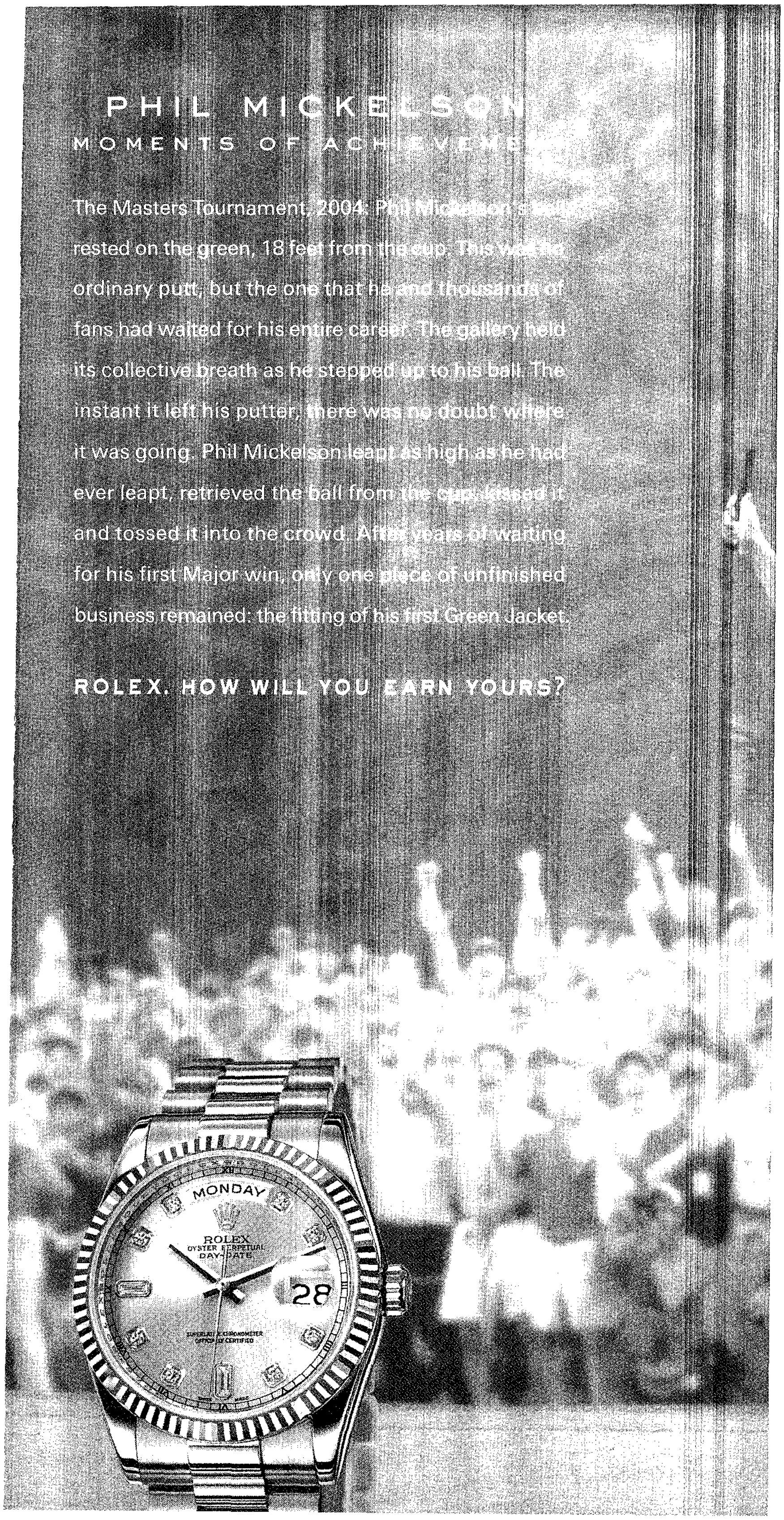
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PHIL MICKELSON

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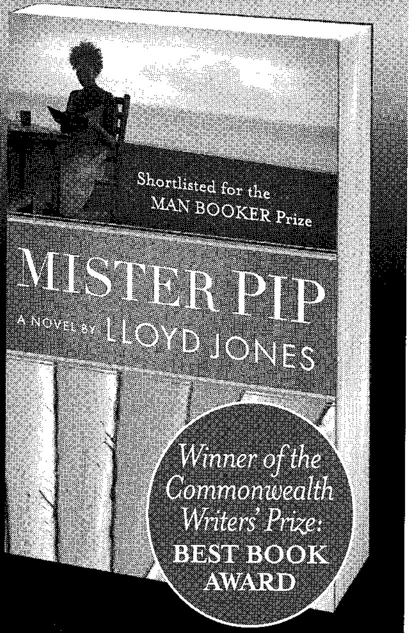

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CONTRIBUTORS

Lawrence Wright ("The Rebellion Within," p. 36) has written seven books, including "The Looming Tower: Al-Qaeda and the Road to 9/11," which won the Pulitzer Prize for General Nonfiction last year.

Alec Wilkinson ("Non-Lethal Force," p. 26), a longtime contributor to the magazine, has published eight books, including "The Happiest Man in the World: An Account of the Life of Poppa Neutrino."

Jenny Allen (Shouts & Murmurs, p. 34) is the author of "The Long Chalkboard" and "The Big Boot," a monologue, which she will perform in New York next year.

Lizzie Widdicombe (The Talk of the Town, p. 22) is a member of the magazine's editorial staff.

Stanley Plumly (Poem, p. 44) is the author of many collections of poetry, including "Old Heart." His book "Posthumous Keats" has just been published.

Jonathan Rosen (A Critic at Large, p. 72) is the editorial director of Nextbook. His new book, "The Life of the Skies: Birding at the End of Nature," was published in February.

Jeffrey Toobin ("The Dirty Trickster," p. 54) is the author of "The Nine: Inside the Secret World of the Supreme Court," which won the 2008 J. Anthony Lukas Book Prize.

Arda Collins (Poem, p. 60) received the 2008 Yale Series of Younger Poets Prize. Her début collection, "It Is Daylight," will be published next spring.

Janet Frame (Fiction, p. 64), who was born in Dunedin, New Zealand, in 1924, wrote more than twenty works of fiction, poetry, and memoir. She was awarded many prizes, including the Commonwealth Writers' Prize. This story was found among her papers after her death, in 2004.

Paul Goldberger (The Sky Line, p. 68), the magazine's architecture critic, holds the Joseph Urban Chair in Design and Architecture at the New School.

Edward Sorel (Illustration, p. 73) is a longtime contributor. His book "The Mural at the Waverly Inn: A Portrait of Greenwich Village Bohemians," with text by Dorothy Gallagher, will be published in the fall.

Bob Staake (Cover), an illustrator, has a new children's book, "Trucks Go Pop!," coming out next month.

THIS WEEK ON NEWYORKER.COM

Audio: *Hendrik Hertzberg, Ryan Lizza,* and *Dorothy Wickenden* discuss the Presidential race. / *Paul Goldberger* on the architecture of the Beijing Olympics, and photographs by *Iwan Baan.* / Video from The New Yorker Conference. / The Naked Campaign video series, featuring *Steve Brodner.* / The Book Bench, a new literary blog, plus blogs by *George Packer, Dana Goodyear, Sasha Frere-Jones,* and the editors of Goings On About Town. / From the archives: *Lawrence Wright* on Al Qaeda, *Pauline Kael* on Indiana Jones. / Animated cartoons, the caption contest, and a list of *New Yorker* events.

THE MAIL

HUMBLE BEGINNINGS

As Cynthia Zarin notes, Mark Twain and Charlie Chaplin publicly stated their doubt that William Shakespeare wrote the plays attributed to him ("After Hamlet," May 5th). Twain and Chaplin separately jumped to the same conclusion; namely, that a man of William Shakespeare's humble origins could never have attained such a lofty achievement. Neither Twain (from antebellum Missouri) nor Chaplin (from the slums of Victorian Lambeth) seemed to notice that his own origins were as lowly as Shakespeare's, yet they both managed to attain greatness. Twain's and Chaplin's skepticism about Shakespeare is even more ironic in view of a trait shared by all three men: although born and raised in poverty, each had the benefit of a father who was a comparatively prominent figure in his immediate locality. Chaplin's father was a music-hall entertainer who was sufficiently popular in Lambeth to have had his name and likeness published on the sheet music of at least one popular song. John Shakespeare was an alderman and bailiff in sixteenth-century Warwickshire, and Twain's father, John Marshall Clemens, was a county judge in rural Missouri. In fact, John Shakespeare and John Clemens were very nearly counterparts: both of them served their localities as justices of the peace.

F. Gwynplaine MacIntyre
New York City

THE BENEFITS OF DIVERSITY

Jill Lepore contends that the fundamental notion of noninterference by the state in religious matters was a boon to religion and to the many churches dotting the Colonial landscape (A Critic at Large, April 14th). But many religious historians, foremost among them Sidney Mead, in his book "The Lively Experiment," see a different set of assumptions in operation. The constitutional assurance that there would be no establishment of a state church, such as the Founders had known in Great Britain, was to insure that there would be no one major religious institution vying for power with the central, federal government and its leadership. The Founders were not being generous by providing for the proliferation of all manner of religious denominations, sects, and marginal groups of believers. Rather, they knew that a diverse pot and a marketplace of religious beliefs and affections would keep at bay any unified voice of challenge or critique of the leaders of the state.

Stephen J. Nelson
Providence, R.I.

KNOW YOUR IAMBS

"Did we order forks, by the way?" according to Lauren Collins, "could be considered iambic quadrameter" (The Talk of the Town, May 12th). It could, if changed to this: "Have forks been ordered, by the way?" As is: no way in hell is it iambic.

Roy Blount, Jr.
Mill River, Mass.

KEEPING IT REAL

Pascal Dangin admits that he is complicit in perpetuating unrealistic images of the human body, but justifies this by saying, "I'm just giving the supply to the demand," to which Lauren Collins then parenthetically adds, "Fashion advertisements are not public-service announcements" ("Pixel Perfect," May 12th). That may be so, but neither should they be public-disservice announcements, projecting images based on fantasy, without including some sort of disclaimer; e.g., "This photo has been retouched." Without a disclaimer, the retouchers and those who hire them do a public disservice by setting impossibly high standards for impressionable people.

Nita Nordlicht
St. Louis, Mo.

•

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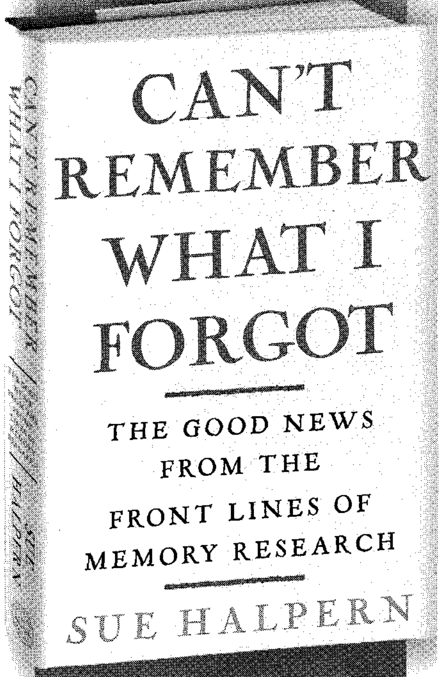
Has science found a fountain of youth for the mind?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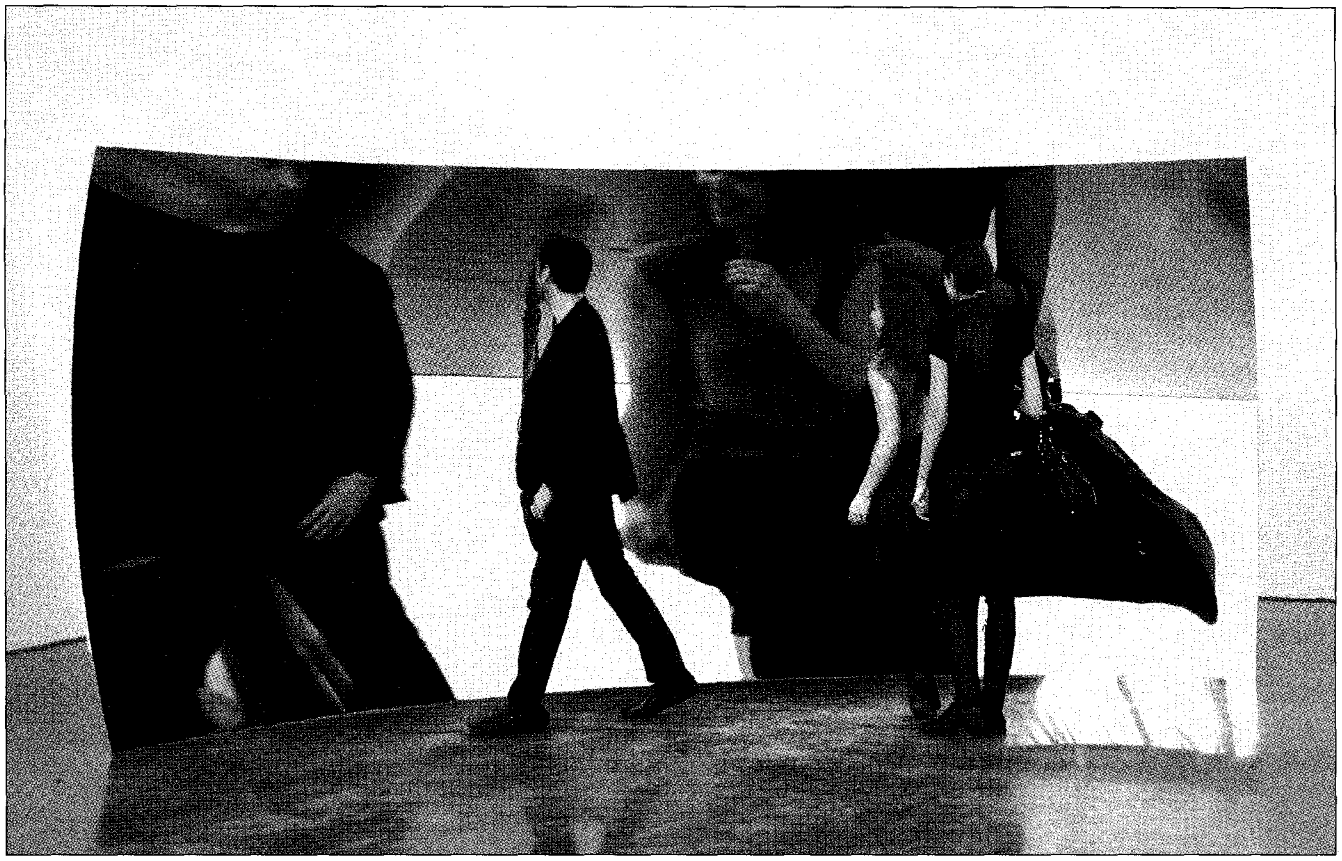

Anish Kapoor's recent sculptures, at Gladstone gallery. Photograph by Lisa Kereszi.

GOINGS ON ABOUT TOWN

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THIS WEEK

NIGHT LIFE
NO KIDDING

James McMurtry is a brooding Texas troubadour whose razor-sharp storytelling befits his lineage (he's the son of the novelist Larry McMurtry). His ninth album, "Just Us Kids," came out last month; he has shows at Maxwell's and Southpaw. (See page 10.)

ART
FINNISH LINE

The Nordic landscape haunts works by sixteen contemporary artists in "Arctic Hysteria: New Art from Finland," at P.S. 1. Sami Sänpäkkilä offers a reindeer's-eye view in a video shot with an antler-mounted camera, the sculptor Markus Copper invokes the recent disaster that befell the Russian submarine Kursk, and Anni Rapinoja fashions shoes, coats, and hats from native flora. (See page 11.)

DANCE
MOVIN' IN

"Movin' Out" is but a memory, and Twyla Tharp, the master of propulsive motion and deadpan glamour, is back. Her new dance for American Ballet Theatre, "Rabbit and Rogue," is a collaboration with the composer Danny Elfman, and it débuts at the Met on June 3. With costumes by Norma Kamali and with Herman Cornejo and Ethan Stiefel as leads, what's not to like? (See page 12.)

CLASSICAL MUSIC
MILLER TIME

The operas of Mozart have long overshadowed those of his contemporary Domenico Cimarosa, but a number of listeners over the years have admired them—including Goethe, Stendhal, and Jonathan Miller, who will direct the composer's comic opera "Il Matrimonio Segreto" at BAM this week. (See page 13.)

MOVIES
MILK AND HONEY

To commemorate the sixtieth anniversary of the founding of Israel, Walter Reade presents a diverse array of recent Israeli films, including "Checkpoint," Yoav Shamir's documentary about the interaction of Israeli soldiers and Palestinians in the West Bank. (See page 17.)

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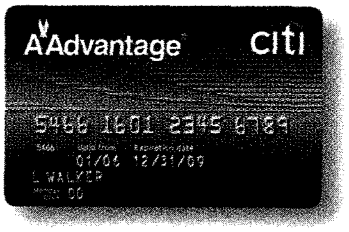

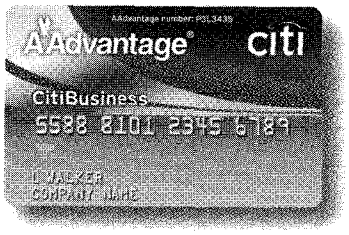

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THE THEATRE
OPENINGS AND PREVIEWS

Please call the phone number listed with the theatre for timetables and ticket information.

BODY AWARENESS
The world première of a play by Annie Baker, about a photographer of nude women who creates a scandal on a Vermont college campus. Karen Kohlhaas directs. In previews. (Atlantic Stage 2, 330 W. 16th St. 212-279-4200.)

THE COCKTAIL HOUR
Theater Breaking Through Barriers presents A. R. Gurney's comedy, about a young man who asks his parents' permission to produce a play about them. Ike Schambelan directs. In previews. (Kirk, 410 W. 42nd St. 212-279-4200.)

HAMLET
Shakespeare in the Park opens with the tragedy, staged by Oskar Eustis (the artistic director of the Public) and starring Michael Stuhlbarg, Lauren Ambrose, Sam Waterston, and Margaret Colin. In previews. (Delacorte Theatre, Central Park, near W. 81st St. For information about free tickets, which are required, call 212-539-8750.)

JOLLYSHIP THE WHIZ-BANG
Nick Jones wrote the book and lyrics for this pirate-puppet theatrical rock show by the troupe of the same name. Sam Gold directs. In previews. (Ars Nova, 511 W. 54th St. 212-868-4444.)

LEN, ASLEEP IN VINYL
Second Stage's Uptown Series begins with a dark comedy by Carly Mensch, about a music producer who reunites with his estranged son. Jackson Gay directs. In previews. Opens June 2. (McGinn/Cazale, Broadway at 76th St. 212-246-4422.)

JOHN RITTER

POP NOTES
EASY BEING GREEN

The seminal hip-hop group Public Enemy, still going strong after twenty years, recently released an album titled "How You Sell Soul to a Soulless People Who Sold Their Soul?" The new Al Green album, **"Lay It Down"** (Blue Note), addresses the same issue, though less stridently. Green's career has been filled with ambivalence toward soul music, even as he was its chief standard-bearer. In the late seventies, he abandoned secular music for a career in gospel. He stood near the dividing line for several years and then, in 2003, crossed back over for good, making a pair of wonderful, autumnal soul records with his longtime collaborator Willie Mitchell.

"Lay It Down" is a different exercise altogether. Here, Green worked with Ahmir (?uestlove) Thompson, the drummer from the Roots, and a small band of musicians—the guitarist Chalmers (Spanky) Alford, the bassist Adam Blackstone, and the keyboardist James Poyser—who have, together and apart, provided the backbone for neo-soul releases by artists such as D'Angelo, Jill Scott, and Musiq Soulchild. The idea for "Lay It Down" was to pair Green with today's top young soul vocalists, and about half the album follows that formula: there's a pair of songs with Anthony Hamilton, and one each with Corinne Bailey Rae and John Legend. But "Lay It Down" isn't the soul equivalent of Santana's "Supernatural." Green is the undisputed star, and his vocals have the most wattage by a wide margin. It's foolish to expect these songs to match Green's seventies masterpieces—there's nothing as spirited as "Stand Up" or as Holy Spirited as "Jesus Is Waiting." Still, plenty of arrows find the outer edge of the bull's-eye. Hamilton appears on both the slinky title track and the funky "You've Got the Love I Need," which also features the Dap-King Horns. Rae holds up her end of the bargain on the coolly sexy "Take Your Time." On the cover of "Al Green Is Love," more than thirty years ago, Green grinned from beneath a puffy Afro: his hair and his falsetto have lost a little off the top, but the other skills—the smoothness, the buoyancy, the understanding of lust in the service of love—remain intact. Because real soul music admits (and even depends upon) a certain amount of pain, it's worth sounding the one sad note: Alford, the majestic gospel-soul guitarist, died in March after years of battling diabetes.

—Ben Greenman

CYMBELINE
New York Classical Theatre kicks off its season of free, peripatetic, al-fresco theatre with the Shakespeare romance, directed by Louis Scheeder. Opens May 29. (Central Park, enter at W. 103rd St. 212-252-4531.)

EDWARD ALBEE'S OCCUPANT
Signature Theatre Company presents Edward Albee's 2002 work about the sculptor Louise Nevelson, starring Mercedes Ruehl and Larry Bryggman. Pam MacKinnon directs. In previews. (Peter Norton Space, 555 W. 42nd St. 212-244-7529.)

THE EUTHANASIST
Liza Lentini wrote this one-woman show, in which a caregiver muses on the ethics of euthanasia. Previews begin May 29. Opens May 31. (P.S. 122, at 150 First Ave., at 9th St. 212-352-3101.)

FEMINAZI
Suzanne Willett wrote and performs this comedy, about the effect of strong women on our society. In previews. (Players Theatre, 115 MacDougal St. 212-239-6200.)

REASONS TO BE PRETTY
The world première of a comic drama by Neil LaBute, in which a man's comments about a co-worker's beauty get back to his wife. Piper Perabo, Alison Pill, Thomas Sadoski, and Pablo Schreiber star. Terry Kinney directs the MCC Theatre production. In previews. Opens June 2. (Lucille Lortel, 121 Christopher St. 212-279-4200.)

SAVED
The world première of a new musical based on the 2004 film, about various imbroglios at a Christian high school. With music and lyrics by Michael Friedman and a book and lyrics by John Dempsey and Rinne Groff. Gary Griffin directs. In previews. Opens June 3. (Playwrights Horizons, 416 W. 42nd St. 212-279-4200.)

STOMP AND SHOUT
Babel Theatre Project presents a play by James Carmichael, about the F.B.I. investigation into the song "Louie Louie" in the early sixties. Geordie Broadwater directs. Previews begin May 29. Opens June 1. (Upstairs at the 45th Street Theatre, 354 W. 45th St. 212-352-3101.)

THREE ON A COUCH
Carl Djerassi wrote this comedy, about a writer who fakes his own death to see what people write about him. Elena Araoz directs. Previews begin May 29. (SoHo Playhouse, 15 Vandam St. 212-691-1555.)

VICIOUS DOGS ON PREMISES
Witness Relocation incorporates improv into a play by Saviana Stanescu that explores cruelty and love in the context of trained dogs. Preview on May 29. Opens May 30. (Ontological Theatre, St. Mark's In-the-Bowery, Second Ave. at 10th St. 212-352-3101.)

NOW PLAYING

ARTEFACTS
The "Brits Off Broadway" festival continues with Mike Bartlett's drama about a sixteen-year-old girl who finds out that her father, whom she's never met, stole an antique from the National Museum in Baghdad. James Grieve directs. (59E59, at 59 E. 59th St. 212-279-4200.)

BLINK
This drama by Ian Rowlands, about child abuse at a school in Wales, is part of the "Brits Off Broadway" festival. Stephen Fisher directs. (59E59, at 59 E. 59th St. 212-279-4200.)

GOOD BOYS AND TRUE
A tabloid fiction dressed up as a morality tale. When a prep-school jock (Brian J. Smith) is linked to a homemade sex tape found on campus, his mother (J. Smith-Cameron, in a flat role) must choose between complicity—if the scandal gets hushed up, the boy goes to Dartmouth—and conscience. Roberto Aguirre-Sacasa's dialogue is just clever enough to distract from the laziness of the portrayal of the ethical stakes. Locker-room culture is exposed as misogynistic, the female victim is a working-class saint, and nary a wrench is thrown into the works. Scott Ellis mounts a handsome production with some winning acting, but the fact remains: there was more ambiguity, social resonance, and, for that matter, tawdriness in the Duke lacrosse-team case. (Second Stage, 307 W. 43rd St. 212-246-4422. Through June 1.)

THE GREAT AMERICAN ALL-STAR TRAVELING WAR MACHINE
Based on Lewis Lapham's "States of War," this ninety-minute theatrical mongrel of sketch comedy sprinkled amid war songs, historical reënactments, and dramatized military documents feels longer than it actually is—perhaps much like war itself—largely owing to the confusing and uneven treatment of the texts. Despite some high points—most notably a body count of the "Rambo" movies—compliments of an utterly compelling if rough-around-the-edges cast, things can occasionally feel like a "Schoolhouse Rock" history lesson in which a famous speech turns into a cheery dance number, and the heavier, more sincere moments, such as Jessica Lynch's heart-wrenching 2007 testimony before Congress, come off as a bit awkward, lost in all the lighthearted tomfoolery. (Theatre for the New City, 155 First Ave., at 10th St. 212-352-3101.)

JOHN LITHGOW: STORIES BY HEART
John Lithgow's intimate one-man show is about storytelling of the best kind—at home, out loud, among generations. Weaving together classic and personal narratives, he describes how his grandmother thrilled her grandchildren with poems such as Oliver Wendell Holmes's "The Wonderful One-Hoss Shay," which he recites, and how his parents read their children short stories, of which everybody's favorite was the raucous Wodehouse gem "Uncle Fred Flits By." Lithgow's performance is masterly, his own storytelling warm and commanding, marked by a judicious use of detail. By the time we are at his ailing, elderly father's bedside, Wodehouse in hand, the adventures of Pongo Twistleton and his madcap uncle have become something else entirely: a balm, a restorative, at once heartbreaking and hilarious. Directed by Jack O'Brien. Sundays and Mondays only. (Mitzi E. Newhouse, 150 W. 65th St. 212-239-6200. Through June 2.)

MARATHON 2008
Ensemble Studio Theatre presents its annual festival of new one-act plays, including Neil LaBute's "The Great War," directed by Andrew McCarthy; "Okay," by Taylor Mac; "October/November," by Anne Washburn; and "An Upset," by David Auburn. (549 W. 52nd St. 212-352-3101.)

PORT AUTHORITY
The New York première of a play by Conor McPherson ("The Seafarer"), about three generations of Irishmen in modern-day Dublin. (Reviewed in this issue.) (Atlantic Theatre Company, 336 W. 20th St. 212-279-4200.)

PRISONER OF THE CROWN
The Irish Rep presents Richard F. Stockton's drama about Sir Roger Casement, an Irish patriot who was convicted of treason in 1916. Ciarán O'Reilly directs. (132 W. 22nd St. 212-727-2737.)

THE SOUND AND THE FURY
Elevator Repair Service's rendition of the first section of William Faulkner's 1929 novel is narrated by Benjamin Compson, a nearly mute, mentally handicapped thirty-three-year-old whose childlike mind flits indiscriminately between the present and the past. Under the masterly direction of John Collins, a troupe of about a dozen actors has most of the Compson household—Benjy's two older brothers, Quentin and Jason; his beloved sister, Caddy; his hypochondriac mother; and the stalwart black maid, Dilsey, among others—onstage at once. With his inability to editorialize experience, Benjy shows us that Caddy is the center of her brothers' lives and that the various cruelties they inflict on one another while competing for her love are her undoing. Like the book, the show is both redemptive and tacky. It runs on something more substantial than chic, more difficult than irony—namely, the real blood and sweat that go into making stories feel realer than reality. (Reviewed in our issue of 5/26/08.) (New York Theatre Workshop, 79 E. 4th St. 212-239-6200. Through June 1.)

TOP GIRLS
In the first (and best) act of Caryl Churchill's daring and difficult play from 1982 (under the direction of James Macdonald), Marlene (Elizabeth Marvel), a diehard Thatcherite, throws an imaginary dinner party to congratulate herself on having been appointed managing director of a female employment agency. The guests include Pope Joan (the impressive Martha Plimpton), the Victorian traveller Isabella Bird (Marisa Tomei), and Dull Gret, of the Bruegel painting (the droll Ana Reeder). Like almost all the guests, Marlene has had to give up a child—a lost soul called Angie (also played by Plimpton), now a teen-ager, who has been reared by Marlene's working-class sister, Joyce (also played by Tomei). Marlene's success, we come to understand, has been won at the expense of others. The de-rigueur face-off between Marlene and her sister, however, is weakened for the audience by Tomei's miserable accent. Nonetheless, the meaning if not the music of Churchill's play comes through. (5/19/08) (Biltmore, 261 W. 47th St. 212-239-6200.)

Also Playing

ADDING MACHINE: Minetta Lane Theatre, 18 Minetta Lane. 212-307-4100. **AUGUST: OSAGE COUNTY:** Imperial, 245 W. 45th St. 212-239-6200. **AVENUE Q:** Golden, 252 W. 45th St. 212-239-6200. **BETRAYED:** Culture Project, 55 Mercer St. 212-352-3101. **CAT ON A HOT TIN ROOF:** Broadhurst, 235 W. 44th St. 212-239-6200. **A CATERED AFFAIR:** Walter Kerr, 219 W. 48th St. 212-239-6200. **THE COUNTRY GIRL:** Bernard B. Jacobs, 242 W. 45th St. 212-239-6200. **CRY-BABY:** Marquis, Broadway at 45th St. 212-307-1400. **CURTAINS:** Al Hirschfeld, 302 W. 45th St. 212-239-6200. **DAMASCUS:** 59 E. 59th St. 212-279-4200. Through June 1. **FROM UP HERE:** City Center, Stage I, 131 W. 55th St. 212-581-1212. **GREASE:** Brooks Atkinson, 256 W. 47th St. 212-307-4100. **GYPSY:** St. James, 246 W. 44th St. 212-239-6200. **HAIRSPRAY:** Neil Simon, 250 W. 52nd St. 212-307-4100. **HOW THEATER FAILED AMERICA:** Barrow Street Theatre, 27 Barrow St. 212-239-6200. **THE IMPORTANCE OF BEING EARNEST:** Pearl, 80 St. Marks Pl. 212-598-9802. **IN THE HEIGHTS:** Richard Rodgers, 226 W. 46th St. 212-239-6200. **JERSEY BOYS:** August Wilson, 245 W. 52nd St. 212-239-6200. **LES LIAISONS DANGEREUSES:** American Airlines Theatre, 227 W. 42nd St. 212-719-1300. **THE LITTLE MERMAID:** Lunt-Fontanne, 205 W. 46th St. 212-307-4747. **MONTY PYTHON'S SPAMALOT:** Shubert, 225 W. 44th St. 212-239-6200. **THE NEW CENTURY:** Mitzi E. Newhouse, 150 W. 65th St. 212-239-6200. **NOVEMBER:** Barrymore, 243 W. 47th St. 212-239-6200. **OLD COMEDY AFTER ARISTOPHANES' FROGS:** Classic Stage Company, 136 E. 13th St. 866-811-4111. Through May 31. **PASSING STRANGE:** Belasco, 111 W. 44th St. 212-239-6200. **RAFTA, RAFTA . . . :** Acorn, 410 W. 42nd St. 212-279-4200. **SOUTH PACIFIC:** Vivian Beaumont, Lincoln Center. 212-239-6200. **SPRING AWAKENING:** Eugene O'Neill, 230 W. 49th St. 212-239-6200. **SUNDAY IN THE PARK WITH GEORGE:** Studio 54, at 254 W. 54th St. 212-239-6200. **THE 39 STEPS:** Cort, 138 W. 48th St. 212-239-6200. **THURGOOD:** Booth, 222 W. 45th St. 212-239-6200. **XANADU:** Helen Hayes, 240 W. 44th St. 212-239-6200.

NIGHT LIFE
ROCK AND POP

Musicians and night-club proprietors live complicated lives; it's advisable to call ahead to confirm engagements.

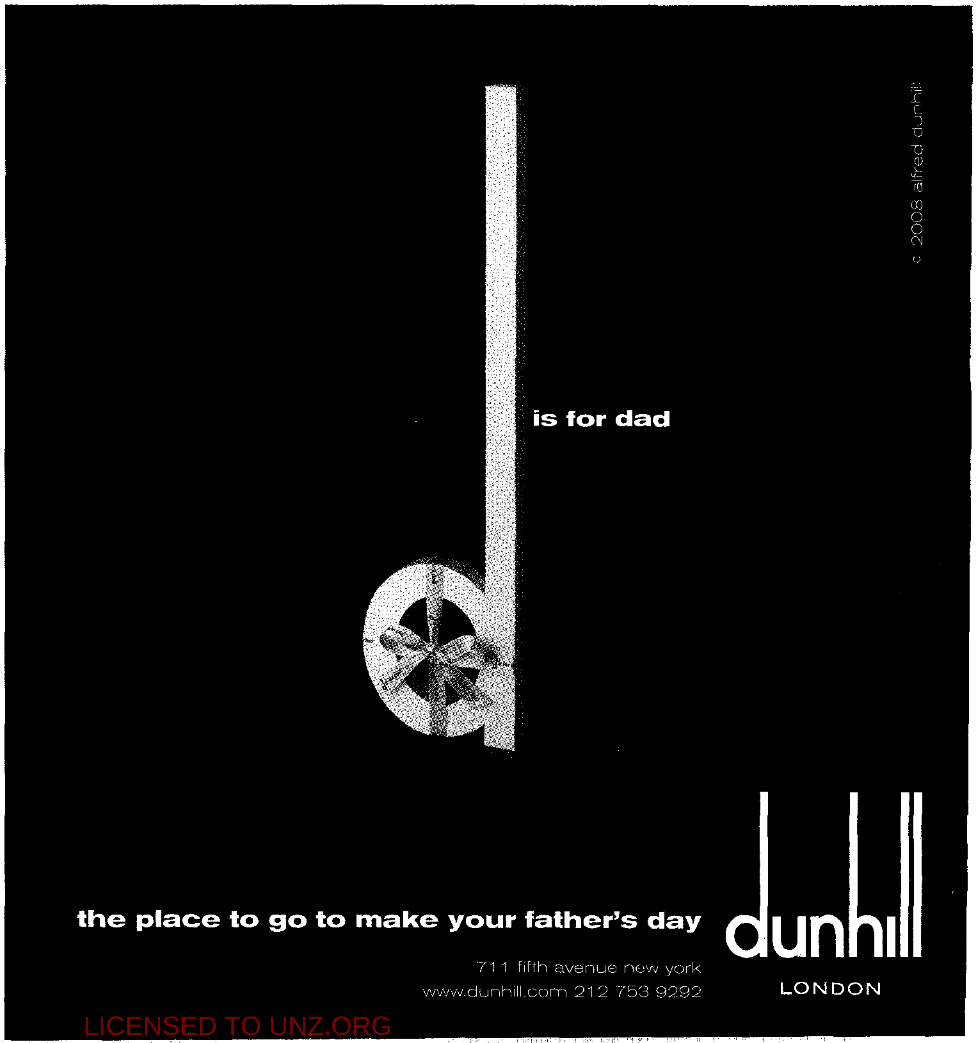
B. B. KING BLUES CLUB & GRILL
237 W. 42nd St. (212-997-4144)—May 30: Unbeatable music for getting down, from New Orleans's **Funky Meters.** May 31: The legendary calypsonian **Mighty Sparrow.** June 1: **Pete Best,** the original drummer for the Beatles, and his band.

BLUE NOTE
131 W. 3rd St., near Sixth Ave. (212-475-8592)—June 3-4: The vocalist **Bilal,** who was born Bilal Sayeed Oliver and was raised in Philadelphia by a Christian mother and an orthodox-Muslim father, has appeared on albums by Common, Erykah Badu, and other hip-hop musicians. Classically trained, he deftly combines streams of jazz, hip-hop, funk, and soul in his music; he's as comfortable with falsetto and scatting as he is with laying down smooth raps. For this engagement, he'll be backed by a small band that includes the jazz pianist **Robert Glasper.**

BOWERY BALLROOM
6 Delancey St. (212-533-2111)—May 31: Liverpool's **Clinic** signal their independence from the grubby world of contemporary rock music by appearing onstage in surgical masks. Their tendency toward sartorial whimsy (on this tour they're also wearing Hawaiian shirts) reflects their madcap approach to making music. Clinic's percussion-driven ballads, disguised as art punk, are completely original, thanks, in part, to their front man, Ade Blackburn, whose vocals project both yearning and contempt.

CANAL ROOM
285 West Broadway (212-941-8100)—May 29: The local group **Urban Blight** is reuniting for the first time in ten years. During its eighties heyday, Urban Blight shared the stage with such artists as the Red Hot Chili Peppers, UB40, and Kid Creole. Expect funky, horn-fuelled R. & B. and reggae and sweaty, happy dancers.

FILLMORE NEW YORK AT IRVING PLAZA
17 Irving Pl., at 15th St. (212-777-6800)—May 28: **She Wants Revenge,** a Los Angeles duo that has been one of the more successful acts to mine the fertile sound of eighties post-punk, appropriates the sonic sprawl and gloomy minor keys of bands like Joy Division and Depeche Mode. While the pair, Adam (Adam 12) Bravin and the former rapper Justin Warfield, are not particularly original, their knack for catchy melodies largely redeems them. With the frenzied garage racket of Nashville's **Be Your Own Pet,** the British indie combo **Switches,** and the **Virgins.**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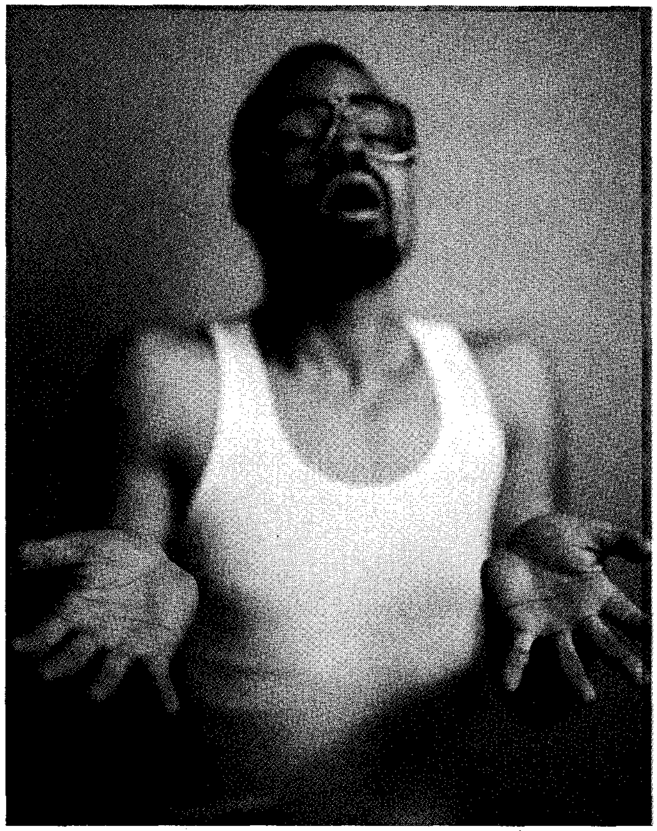
May 31: Southern California's **Pennywise** has long sought to rekindle the dying embers of hardcore punk. Green Day, Rancid, the Offspring, and Blink 182 made the headlines. Pennywise didn't, but it hasn't given up. June 1: The Bell X-1 was the first aircraft to break the sound barrier. **Bell X1** is an up-and-coming rock band from Ireland with an arena-ready sound containing echoes of Franz Ferdinand, Coldplay, and Radiohead. It's broken through to the top of the charts at home, and is looking to do so here, too.

HIGHLINE BALLROOM
431 W. 16th St. (212-414-5994)—May 28: The **Yoshida Brothers** are two Japanese siblings who have taken the samisen, a banjo-like lute, to rock-star heights in their native land. They update ancient music with pop, jazz, and international influences. May 30: The feisty Brooklyn-based **Hungry March Band,** which was once dubbed "Best Anarchist Parade Band" by a downtown weekly. With the neo-Balkan brass band **Slavic Soul Party!** and the **Main Squeeze Orchestra,** a women's accordion ensemble founded by Walter Kuhr, the proprietor of a Lower East Side accordion shop.

JOE'S PUB
425 Lafayette St. (212-539-8777)—May 29: The versatile and thrilling percussionist **Cyro Baptista's** new quartet, Banquet of the Spirits, pays tribute to the global reach of the late jazz trumpeter Don Cherry and his seventies trio Codona, which featured the sitarist Collin Walcott and the percussionist Nana Vasconcelos. The musically omnivorous group has been inspired in part by Oswaldo de Andrade's 1928 "Cannibal Manifesto," a satirical tract that catalyzed modernism in Brazil and elsewhere. The group features **Brian Marsella,** on keyboards and balaphon, **Tim Keiper,** on drums and additional percussion, and **Shanir Blumenkranz** on acoustic and electric bass, as well as oud and *gimbre*. Later that night, the human-beat-box wizard **Reggie Watts** takes over.

KNITTING FACTORY
74 Leonard St., between Broadway and Church St. (212-219-3132)—June 3: The rap group **Northern State** is three assertive white women from Long Island who go by the names Hesta Prynn, Spero, and Sprout.


The impassioned young vocalist Bilal visits the Blue Note.

ETHAN LEVITAS

MAXWELL'S
1039 Washington St., Hoboken (201-653-1703)—May 30: The former D-Generation front man **Jesse Malin.** June 2: The Southern-fried garage psychedelia of Atlanta's **Black Lips.** June 3: If the Texas-bred songwriter and rocker **James McMurtry** was a visual artist, he'd be Thomas Nast, the nineteenth-century political cartoonist whose "damn pictures" (as Boss Tweed called them) could make or break a leader. Like Nast's drawings, the images of corruption, greed, and hubris found on McMurtry's ninth album, "Just Us Kids," are full of menacing detail.

RADIO CITY MUSIC HALL
Sixth Ave. at 50th St. (212-247-4777)—June 3: The "True Colors" concert unites some of the biggest names of the not so distant past, including **Cyndi Lauper,** the **B-52's,** and the **Indigo Girls,** with such up-and-coming acts as **Regina Spektor** and the **Cliks.** They are on the road in the name of good times and equality for gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgender people. A small portion of the ticket price goes to the Human Rights Campaign.

RIVER TO RIVER FESTIVAL
May 29: A night of top-shelf bluegrass and acoustic music with **Abigail Washburn and the Sparrow Quartet,** which includes the banjo star **Béla Fleck.** (Castle Clinton, Battery Park. For more information, visit www.rivertorivernyc.com.)

SOUTHPAW
125 Fifth Ave., Park Slope, Brooklyn (718-230-0236)—June 1: In a more perfect world, all putatively great bar bands would live up to their hype as gamely as the **Radiators** do. Shored up by Ed Volker's hearty singing and boogie-driven keyboard riffs, this New Orleans-based group delivers its bluesy rock with all the gusto you could ask for. June 4: **James McMurtry** (see Maxwell's).

SYMPHONY SPACE
Broadway at 95th St. (212-864-5400)—May 30: **Le Mystère des Voix Bulgares.** This sizable female choir from Bulgaria, which dates back fifty years, features colorfully dressed members and beautiful and complex arrangements.

TERMINAL 5
610 W. 56th St. (212-582-6600)—May 30-June 1: The **Raconteurs,** who are led by Jack White and Brendan Benson and who have suffered from the perception that they are just a diversion from White's day job in the White Stripes, have released a second record, "Consolers of the Lonely," that should change the way they are seen. A much more experimental affair than the band's début, "Broken Boy Soldiers," it embraces a wide range of styles. If this is just a side project, it's certainly one to watch. With Atlanta's **Black Lips** (see Maxwell's). June 2-3: **Rilo Kiley** sprang to life more than a decade ago in the lo-fi underbrush and has since grown into a towering pop band. Credit goes not only to the clear-sky vocals of the front woman, Jenny Lewis, and the mellow guitar playing of Blake Sennett but to the entire group's sense of adventurousness.

JAZZ AND STANDARDS

ALGONQUIN HOTEL
59 W. 44th St. (212-840-6800)—Through June 14: **Karen Akers.** "Move On," the new show by the doyenne of latter-day cabaret, explores the concept of personal change. Among the offerings are Stephen Sondheim's "The Glamorous Life," Cole Porter's "Down in the Depths," and Leiber and Stoller's "Ready to Begin Again."

APOLLO THEATRE
253 W. 125th St. (212-531-5300)—May 29: The "Great Night in Harlem" concert, a benefit for the Jazz Foundation of America, features the actors **Bill Cosby** and **Danny Glover,** along with **Dave Brubeck, Phil Woods, James (Blood) Ulmer,** and many other noted musicians.

BIRDLAND
315 W. 44th St. (212-581-3080)—May 28-31: The veteran jazz singer **Rebecca Parris** is using this engagement to record a live album.

BLUE NOTE
131 W. 3rd St., near Sixth Ave. (212-475-8592)—May 27-28: The trombonist **Conrad Herwig** adapts Wayne Shorter's memorable and malleable compositions on his new album, "The Latin Side of Wayne Shorter." May 29-June 1: The trumpeter **Jon Faddis,** whose phenomenal technical gifts can often obscure an inner vein of lyricism, fronts a quartet that includes the pianist **David Hazeltine.**

DIZZY'S CLUB COCA-COLA
Broadway at 60th St. (212-258-9595)—May 27-June 1: The **Bill Charlap** trio. Working in spruce synchronicity with the bassist **Peter Washington** and the drummer **Kenny Washington,** the pianist Charlap displays the poise and taste, and, increasingly, the depth, of such grand stylists as Hank Jones and the late Tommy Flanagan.

FEINSTEIN'S AT LOEWS REGENCY
540 Park Ave., at 61st St. (212-339-4095)—Through May 31: **Bebe Neuwirth,** a modern monarch of the small screen and the big stage, is accompanied by the pianist **Scott Cady** as she takes on material by Kurt Weill, Kander and Ebb, Cole Porter, Stephen Sondheim, and Tom Waits.

IRIDIUM
1650 Broadway, at 51st St. (212-582-2121)—May 29-June 1: The **Latin Jazz All Stars** bring together such A-list players as **Steve Turre, Candido, Jimmy Bosch, Claudio Roditi, David Sánchez, Arturo O'Farrill, Dave Valentin,** and **Pete Escovedo.** Mondays belong to the electric-guitar innovator **Les Paul.** The **Mingus Big Band** takes over on Tuesdays.

ISSUE PROJECT ROOM
232 3rd St., at Third Ave., 3rd fl., Brooklyn. (718-330-0313)—May 28-31: The groundbreaking multimedia artist Joshua White, a key player during the psychedelic age (he set eyeballs spinning in the late sixties at Bill Graham's Fillmore East), brings in the **Joshua Light Show** for a series of audiovisual collaborations. Different genres of music will be represented each night. A highlight comes on May 30 with the **Spiritual Unity** ensemble. Inspired by the free-jazz saxophonist Albert Ayler, it honors his legacy in a unique way: it dispenses with the saxophone altogether. **Marc Ribot's** squalling electric guitar and **Roy Campbell's** brazen trumpet take the lead instead. The legendary bassist **Henry Grimes,** an Ayler vet, is on board. (See Classical.)

JAZZ STANDARD
116 E. 27th St. (212-576-2232)—May 27-June 1: The imposing trumpeter **Terence Blanchard,** a native of New Orleans, displayed uncommonly compelling emotive powers on his most recent album, "A Tale of God's Will (A Requiem for Katrina)," from 2007. His quintet is bolstered by the saxophonist **Brice Winston.**

JOE'S PUB
425 Lafayette St. (212-539-8777)—May 28: The latest release by the vocalist **Holly Cole,** a star in her native Canada, is an eponymously titled album of standards by Porter, Mancini, and Jobim, given new snap by way of Cole's understated humor.

VILLAGE VANGUARD
178 Seventh Ave. S., at 11th St. (212-255-4037)—May 27-June 1: The master drummer **Paul Motian** always provides quirky and bracing rhythms and edgy group interplay in his bands. Trio 2000 Plus 2 unites the saxophonists **Michael Attais** and **Loren Stillman.** The **Vanguard Jazz Orchestra** holds sway on Mondays.

ART
MUSEUMS AND LIBRARIES

METROPOLITAN MUSEUM
Fifth Ave. at 82nd St. (212-535-7710)—**"Superheroes: Fashion and Fantasy"** rescues clothing from the realm of mere mortals via Hollywood costumes, haute couture, and high-performance sportswear. Designs render the body untouchable (Hussein Chalayan's rigid airplane dress in fibreglass, Balenciaga's plated-metal gladiator leggings), or turn the wearer bionic (Speedo's Fastskin swimwear) or machine-like (Thierry Mugler's motorcycle bodice with handlebars and side mirrors). When television and movie costumes appear—Lynda Carter's satin "Wonder Woman" cape, Robert Downey, Jr.,'s "Iron Man" suit—they tend to trump the fashion, as when Michelle Pfeiffer's "Catwoman" getup meets couture takes on bondage. Through Sept. 1. ♦ **"Medieval and Renaissance Treasures from the Victoria and Albert Museum."** Through Aug. 17. ♦ **"Jeff Koons on the Roof."** Three sculptures from Koons's "Celebration" series are installed on the Met's roof garden: a balloon dog in gleaming yellow; a foil-wrapped candy heart whose taut surfaces reflect the gathered crowds; and a silhouette of Winnie-the-Pooh's sidekick, Piglet, veiled in diaphanous scribbles of color. Koons's characteristic meticulousness is evident (it pains one to consider the inevitable encounters with birds) as the impeccable surfaces sparkle in the sunlight. There is a bit of a scale problem, however, as is the tendency in this roof garden, where few works can compete with the vista. Still, the joyous objects, as buoyant as soap bubbles, look like mascots for summer. Through Oct. 26. ♦ **"Tiepolo Drawings from the Robert Lehman Collection."** Through Aug. 17. ♦ **"Photography on Photography: Reflections on the Medium Since 1960."** Through Oct. 19. ♦ **"Radiance from the Rain Forest: Featherwork in Ancient Peru."** Through Sept. 1. ♦ **"Anatomy of a Masterpiece: How to Read Chinese Paintings."** Through Aug. 10. (Open Tuesdays through Sundays, 9:30 to 5:30, and Friday and Saturday evenings until 9.)

MUSEUM OF MODERN ART
11 W. 53rd St. (212-708-9400)—**"Take Your Time: Olafur Eliasson."** Through June 30. ♦ **"Glossolalia: Languages of Drawing."** Through July 7. ♦ **"Projects 87: Sigalit Landau."** Through July 28. ♦ **"Geometry of Motion 1920s/1970s."** Through June 23. (Open Wednesdays through Mondays, 10:30 to 5:30, and Friday evenings until 8.)

GUGGENHEIM MUSEUM
Fifth Ave. at 89th St. (212-423-3500)—**"Cai Guo-Qiang: I Want to Believe."** Through May 28. (Open Saturdays through Wednesdays, 10 to 5:45, and Fridays, 10 to 7:45.)

WHITNEY MUSEUM OF AMERICAN ART
Madison Ave. at 75th St. (800-944-8639)—**"2008 Whitney Biennial."** Through June 1. ♦ **"Polaroids: Mapplethorpe."** Through Sept. 7. (Open Wednesdays, Thursdays, and weekends, 11 to 6, and Fridays, 1 to 9.)

BROOKLYN MUSEUM
200 Eastern Parkway (718-638-5000)—**"© Murakami."** Through July 13. ♦ **"Utagawa: Masters of the Japanese Print."** Through June 15. ♦ **"Ghada Amer: Love Has No End."** Through Oct. 19. (Open Wednesdays through Fridays, 10 to 5, and weekends, 11 to 6.)

AMERICAN MUSEUM OF NATURAL HISTORY
Central Park W. at 79th St. (212-769-5100)—Horses have been on earth for more than fifty million years, and no other animal has played as big a role in the development of human culture. **"The Horse"** celebrates all things equine, from the dog-size *Hyracotherium*, native to North America in the Eocene, to the estimated hundred and thirty thousand working horses to be found in Manhattan circa 1900 to the Triple Crown racing trophies won by Citation in 1948. View Eadweard Muybridge's photographs of galloping, trotting, and walking, animated in a zoetrope; test your strength on a horsepower meter; compare the skeletons of a Shetland pony and a Clydesdale; watch video of trick riders in China and show jumpers in England; and contemplate the horse in science, agriculture, war, and sport from the Mongol empire of the Khans to the Pony Express. Through Jan. 4, 2009. (Open daily, 10 to 5:45.)

JEWISH MUSEUM
Fifth Ave. at 92nd St. (212-423-3200)—**"Action/Abstraction: Pollock, de Kooning, and American Art, 1940-1976."** Through Sept. 21. ♦ **"Warhol's Jews: Ten Portraits Reconsidered."** Through Aug. 13. (Open Saturdays through Wednesdays, 11 to 5:45, and Thursdays, 11 to 8.)

MORGAN LIBRARY AND MUSEUM
225 Madison Ave., at 36th St. (212-685-0008)—**"Philip Guston: Works on Paper."** Through Aug. 31. ♦ **"Illuminating the Medieval Hunt."** Through Aug. 10. (Open Tuesdays through Thursdays, 10:30 to 5, Fridays, 10:30 to 9, Saturdays, 10 to 6, and Sundays, 11 to 6.)

NATIONAL ACADEMY MUSEUM
Fifth Ave. at 89th St. (212-369-4880)—**"The 183rd Annual."** This year's invitational showcases a hundred and thirty artists, from the established (the painter David Reed, the ceramicist Betty Woodman) to the up-and-coming (the collagist Chambliss Giobbi, the painter Danielle Tegeder). Opens May 29. (Open Wednesdays and Thursdays, noon to 5, and Fridays through Sundays, 11 to 6.)

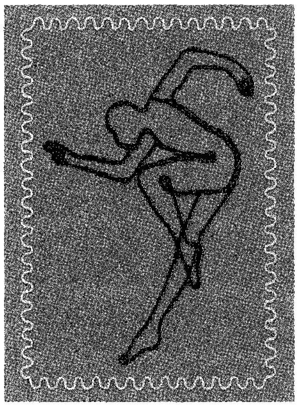
NEW MUSEUM
235 Bowery, at Prince St. (212-219-1222)—**"Paul Chan: The 7 ~~Lights~~."** Through June 29. ♦ **"Tomma Abts."** Through June 29. ♦ **"Double Album: Daniel Guzmán and Steven Shearer."** Through July 6. ♦ **"SANAA: Works 1998-2008."** Through June 15. (Open Wednesdays and weekends, noon to 6, and Thursdays and Fridays, noon to 10.)

NEW YORK BOTANICAL GARDEN
Bronx River Parkway at Fordham Rd., the Bronx (718-817-8700)—**"Moore in America."** The British sculptor Henry Moore (1898-1986) wrote, "I find that all natural forms are a source of unending interest—tree trunks, the texture and variety of grasses . . ." Through autumn, visitors can contemplate twenty of the artist's monumental sculptures—the largest gathering ever in the U.S.—amid the garden's two hundred and fifty acres. Through Nov. 2. ♦ **"Darwin's Garden: An Evolutionary Adventure."** Through July 20. ♦ This year, the annual Spring Flower Show recreates Darwin's garden at Down House, his home outside London, in the conservatory. Through June 15.

P.S. 1 CONTEMPORARY ART CENTER
22-25 Jackson Ave., at 46th Ave., Long Island City (718-784-2084)—**"Take Your Time: Olafur Eliasson."** Through June 30. ♦ **"Arctic Hysteria: New Art from Finland."** Opens June 1. (Open Thursdays through Mondays, noon to 6.)

SCULPTURECENTER
44-19 Purves St., Long Island City (718-361-1750)—Land art, the monumental sculpture genre that flourished three decades ago, wasn't just an exercise in machismo. That's one premise of **"Decoys, Complexes, and Triggers: Feminism and Land Art in the 1970s,"** a smartly curated survey of works by ten women artists made in the heyday of Michael Heizer and Robert Smithson. Much of the work—Nancy Holt's peepholes through sand dunes, Agnes Denes's wheat field in lower Manhattan—could not, obviously, be transported to Queens. Instead, it's represented by photographs, videos, and other documentation. The show does have its share of material objects, including Michelle Stuart's graceful "Sayerville Strata Quartet" (1976), a series of large panels colored with earth in increasingly saturated hues, and Jackie Winsor's solid "Cement Sphere" (1972), whose weight equals the artist's at the time of its making. Alice Aycock's "Staircase (These Stairs Can Be Climbed)" (1974) leads visitors up—not to a glass ceiling, but to opaque plaster and a bird's-eye view of the show. Through July 28. ♦ **"Michael Portnoy: Casino Ilinx."** Through July 28. (Open Thursdays through Mondays, 11 to 6.)

CRITIC'S NOTEBOOK
ART MEETS SCIENCE



The current effort on the part of physicists to resolve the contradictions between quantum mechanics and Einstein's general theory of relativity is not, for most people, something that would spring to mind as a promising subject for a ballet. But it is the subject of Karole Armitage's new work, inspired by the physicist Brian Greene's popular book (and PBS TV series) "The Elegant Universe," and, come to think of it, Armitage's fire-and-ice style is a good fit for these awesome matters. Her piece, a collaboration with the composer Lukas Ligeti, will be given a preview this weekend at the Guggenheim Museum, as part of its "Works & Process" series. On Saturday, Greene—and on Friday, his colleague Jim Gates—will be on hand to tell us about cutting-edge trends in physics. If you flunked in college, here's your chance. After the show, you can meet the participants, and have free sandwiches, at a reception in the museum's rotunda, which itself looks like something out of theoretical physics.

—Joan Acocella

SILJA GÖTZ

GALLERIES—UPTOWN

ERNST LUDWIG KIRCHNER
The painter is best known for his work with Die Brücke, a short-lived group founded in Dresden in 1905. This show makes a case for a Kirchner efflorescence in the late nineteen-twenties and early nineteen-thirties, in the years before the Nazis declared the German Expressionist a "degenerate" artist, prompting his suicide in 1938. Flickers of Surrealism and the influence of post-Cubist Picasso are evident. The colors are vibrant; the subjects primarily pastoral and sedate. There are some unexpected moments—objects and figures occasionally morph into flat, biomorphic shapes—but nothing so remarkable as to revise Kirchner's billing in the annals of art history. Through June 14. (Michael Werner, 4 E. 77th St. 212-988-1623.)

LEIGH LEDARE
Ledare's relationship to his mother is an unusual one. The primary subject of his show and the book it accompanies, both titled "Pretend You're Actually Alive," she appears as a woman of many moods, one of which is fiercely sexual. She is not just nude in many of these pictures, she's pornographic—arching her back, spreading her labia, leering at the camera. The fact that her son is behind that camera adds an Oedipal twist made all the more unsettling when Mom is in bed with a young lover. Like Tierney Gearon and Robert Melee, Ledare goes where few would dare, and the results are as astonishing as they are disturbing. Through June 14. (Roth, 160A E. 70th St. 212-717-9067.)

JEANNE SILVERTHORNE
Behind Silverthorne's drooping cast-rubber lamps, limp-bladed fans, and intestinal piles of electrical cords lurks the ghost of the human body. It's the apparatus that conceives bright ideas and also flubs them, as evidenced by a pair of rubber candelabra festooned with rubber cords and fitted with double-helix-shaped candles inscribed with genetic code for human traits like addiction and panic. At times, Silverthorne mixes a phosphorescent pigment into her rubber sculptures so that they glow green; "Pneuma Machine," a gadget of wobbly valves and slumped-over pipes, looks as if it were haunting the darkened room in which it's installed. Through June 13. (McKee, 745 Fifth Ave., at 57th St. 212-688-5951.)

Short List

RICHARD DIEBENKORN: Greenberg Van Doren, 730 Fifth Ave., at 57th St. 212-445-0444. Through June 27. **SAUL LEITER:** Howard Greenberg, 41 E. 57th St. 212-334-0010. Through June 21. **GABRIEL OROZCO:** Marian Goodman, 24 W. 57th St. 212-977-7160. Through June 14. **PAOLO ROVERSI:** Pace/MacGill, 32 E. 57th St. 212-759-9999. Through June 14.

GALLERIES—CHELSEA

DELIA BROWN
Children, as any tabloid will attest, are the ultimate accessory. Brown, a painter, indulges the fantasy, portraying herself and several similarly childless friends as mothers to a borrowed cast of toddlers and tweens in a glam range of settings. (Even without the press release, we know the pairings are fictions, because the players appear mixed and matched.) Staged in the children's real homes, the opulent little oils present Brown and her surrogates attending to tots, while Lolita-aged girls lounge unsupervised. One suspects that Brown is attempting a critique, but there's a wrinkle: her project is as narcissistic as the culture she takes aim at. Through June 21. (D'Amelio Terras, 525 W. 22nd St. 212-352-9460.)

LOUISE LAWLER
For more than two decades, Lawler has been single-minded in her subject matter: she photographs art work in context, here in museums and auction houses. Since her subject is the commodification of culture, she can't ignore the fact that she's creating commodities, too, and her work has responded to that awareness with incisive wit. Fittingly, her new show includes a number of multiples—photographs that appear four or five times throughout the gallery. One image, of an installation at the new Broad museum, in L.A., is blown up to billboard size to both mirror and mock the art it depicts. Through June 7. (Metro, 519 W. 24th St. 212-206-7100.)

AN-MY LÊ
Born in Vietnam, Lê, now a New Yorker, is known for strong, subtle photographs about war made far from the battlefield, in reënactment maneuvers and training exercises. Although her work is cool and conceptual, it has always managed to convey an emotional charge. Perhaps because her latest project sprawls across several continents—from Antarctica to Japan to Iraq—its emotional tenor is nearly as hard to determine as its theme. Lê's landscapes and seascapes are unfailingly handsome, but her focus is so scattered that if there's a point here, it's been lost. Through June 7. (Murray Guy, 453 W. 17th St. 212-463-7372.)

DAIDO MORIYAMA
Moriyama photographs ordinary places and things—a cornfield, a rubber glove, a box of tools, a train yard, a white high-heeled shoe lying on its side—but his pictures are far from ordinary. Dark and strangely ominous, they have an obsessive quality; you don't know if he's fascinated or disgusted by what he sees. This show of more than a hundred small prints from the nineteen-eighties emphasizes the work's funky immediacy. Because everything, from a nude in bed to an urban back alley, looks like a crime scene, Moriyama seems to channel Weegee while adding an inky layer of noir pessimism all his own. Through June 7. (Kasher, 521 W. 23rd St. 212-966-3978.)

TOM SACHS
What do DieHard batteries, cat-entertainment towers, the No. 7 train, Le Corbusier lamps, skate ramps, Hello Kitty, Stevie Wonder, assault weapons, and the blue-whale model at the Museum of Natural History have in common? They are all muses for Sachs. His two-part show features ironically grandiose bronzes at Lever House, uptown, and a bricoleur's jackpot of objects—made of hot-glued foam core, obsolete electronics, mix tapes, baby dolls, and other salvaged gewgaws—at Sperone Westwater, in Chelsea. Sach's sensibility is best when it's grungiest, which means that the white-painted Miffy rabbit fountaining tears in the Park Avenue sculpture court takes second place to the Frankenstein monster of a grand piano. Through June 21. (Sperone Westwater, 415 W. 13th St. 212-999-7337; Lever House, 390 Park Ave., at 54th. 212-228-5555. Through Sept. 6.)

RUDOLF STINGEL
In 1989, Stingel published a manual giving instructions on how to make knockoffs of his work. The process, illustrated step by step with photographs, involved stencilling paint onto canvas through a screen of patterned tulle. For this show of works on paper, Stingel has painted on the black-and-white how-to photos. The images, partially obscured by blocks of metallic green (the color of money), make painting the butt of its own joke: they depict a tube of pigment being squeezed or a hand wielding an airbrush. In a new group of paintings (also on paper), Stingel follows his original guidelines, applying white on white through patterned tulle, yielding graceful abstractions. Through June 7. (Cooper, 465 W. 23rd St. 212-255-1105.)

Short List

MATTHEW BRANNON: Petzel, 537 W. 22nd St. 212-680-9467. Through July 11. **WALTON FORD:** Kasmin, 293 Tenth Ave., at 27th St. 212-563-4474. Through July 3. **LIAM GILLICK:** Kaplan, 525 W. 21st St. 212-645-7335. Through June 14. **ANISH KAPOOR:** Gladstone, 515 W. 24th St. 212-206-9300. Through June 21; 530 W. 21st St. 212-206-7606. Through Aug. 15. **KERRY JAMES MARSHALL:** Shainman, 513 W. 20th St. 212-645-1701. Through July 3. **NEO RAUCH:** Zwirner, 533 W. 19th St. 212-727-2070. Through June 21. **DAVID SHRIGLEY:** Kern, 532 W. 20th St. 212-367-9663. Through June 21. **LAURIE SIMMONS:** Nitsch, 534 W. 22nd St. 212-645-2030. Through June 28. **ROBERT THERRIEN:** Gagosian, 555 W. 24th St. 212-741-1111. Through June 14. **CHRISTOPHER WOOL:** Luhring Augustine, 531 W. 24th St. 212-206-9100. Through June 21. **"WHO'S AFRAID OF JASPER JOHNS?":** Shafrazi, 544 W. 26th St. 212-274-9300. Through July 12.

GALLERIES—DOWNTOWN

FREDERICK KIESLER
The Austro-American architect practiced both visionary (read: unbuildable) and actual architecture. In the former category are a house in the shape of a tooth and the Endless House, a large-scale plaster model of which was acquired by Philip Johnson for MOMA. Kiesler's realized projects include the interior of Peggy Guggenheim's gallery, Art of This Century, in 1942. In this career survey, drawings of uneven quality and interest are installed on a curvilinear white surface designed by nArchitects. It looks like a Hot Wheels track crossed with an informational display—a fittingly idiosyncratic homage to the show's influential subject. Through July 24. (Drawing Center, 35 Wooster St. 212-219-2166.)

Short List

JOHN BALDESSARI / MATT MULLICAN: Williams, 313 W. 4th St. 212-229-2757. Through June 28. **ELLEN CANTOR:** Participant, 253 East Houston St. 212-254-4334. Through July 6. **STEVE DIBENEDETTO:** Nolan, 560 Broadway, at Prince St. 212-925-6190. Through June 21. **DARA FRIEDMAN:** Brown, 620 Greenwich St. 212-627-5258. Through June 28. **GERT & UWE TOBIAS:** Team, 83 Grand St. 212-279-9219. Through June 14. **"NEW YORK COOL":** Grey Art Gallery, 100 Washington Sq. E. 212-998-6780. Through July 19.

DANCE

NEW YORK CITY BALLET
This week, the talented Alexei Ratmansky, who choreographed the splendid "Russian Seasons," offers a new piece, "Concerto DSCH," set to Shostakovich's Piano Concerto No. 2. Its haunting second movement sets the tone for a particularly juicy pas de deux (for Wendy Whelan and Benjamin Millepied), whose airiness is colored by delicate touches of drama. The ballet will be performed with last year's expressionistic "Oltremare," by Mauro Bigonzetti, and Christopher Wheeldon's elegant quartet "Rococo Variations." Casts appear on the company's Web site a week in advance. ♦ May 28 at 7:30: "Mother Goose," "Afternoon of a Faun," "Antique Epigraphs," and "In G Major." ♦ May 29 and May 31 at 8 and June 3 at 7:30: "Rococo Variations," "River of Light," "Oltremare," and "Concerto DSCH." ♦ May 30 at 8 and June 1 at 3: "Interplay," "Ives, Songs," and "I'm Old Fashioned." (New York State Theatre, Lincoln Center. 212-721-6500. Through June 29.)

AMERICAN BALLET THEATRE
Week two of the season brings "Swan Lake," with its wondrous score, lavish sets, and dashing, purple-clad von Rothbart, who in this staging becomes a perilous rival of the melancholy prince Siegfried. The delicate Odette (and her evil twin, Odile) will be danced by various company ballerinas, including the Kirov star Diana Vishneva (with Marcelo Gomes, on May 29), Julie Kent (with Angel Corella, on May 30), Veronika Part (with David Hallberg, on May 31), and Nina Ananiashvili (also with Corella, on June 2). Next Tuesday, the company reveals the latest ballet by the always exciting Twyla Tharp, "Rabbit and Rogue," with snazzy silver lamé costumes by Norma Kamali and a percussive, multilayered score by Danny Elfman. Casts, which are subject to change, appear on the company's Web site. ♦ May 27, May 29-30, and June 2 at 8 and May 28 and May 31 at 2 and 8: "Swan Lake." ♦ June 3 at 8: "Rabbit and Rogue." (Metropolitan Opera House. 212-362-6000. Through July 12.)

MOMIX
Moses Pendleton's company is back for its annual run, this week performing "Lunar Sea." (Joyce Theatre, 175 Eighth Ave., at 19th St. 212-242-0800. May 27-28 and June 3 at 7:30, May 29-30 at 8, May 31 at 2 and 8, and June 1 at 2 and 7:30. Through June 8.)

***BUGLISI* DANCE THEATRE**
"Sitelines," the Lower Manhattan Cultural Council's summer series that brings dance to unusual spots, opens in front of the New York Stock Exchange with Jacqulyn Buglisi's "Under the Buttonwood Tree.com (A Frenzy on the Floor)," a dance pageant depicting scenes from the history of the financial district. The Aeros Wind Quintet helps supply the pomp. (18 Broad St. 212-219-9401. May 28-30 at 12:30.)

NAMI YAMAMOTO
Yamamoto's new work, "A Howling Flower," has a cast of five humans and one puppet. The puppet, created by Matthew Acheson, who's also one of the five, is a haunting marionette made of found objects; it looks like a baby version of a crash-test dummy with a violin for a spine. In spare and simple episodes, the humans treat the puppet, openly manipulated by Acheson, as no different from themselves, questioning thereby what the difference is. (Dance Theatre Workshop, 219 W. 19th St. 212-924-0077. May 28-31 at 7:30.)

"LA MAMA MOVES"
La Mama's superabundant festival comes to a close, narrowing down to a single program. The multidisciplinary theatre veteran Ping Chong re-creates his 1991 dance "I Will Not Be Sad in This World," and Muna Tseng brings back her 1988 liquid-pouring ritual, "Water, Water." In an entirely different vein, the company of the scholarly ballet choreographer Christopher Caines presents "The Exquisite Hour," part of an evening-length suite not yet premièred, set to art songs by Gabriel Fauré, performed live. (74A E. 4th St. 212-475-7710. May 29-31 at 7:30 and June 1 at 2:30.)

SUSAN RETHORST
"No money, no space." Such is the life of most New York dance-makers, and such is the subject for a series of dances by a venerated member of that tribe, Susan Rethorst. Last year, she presented Part 1 of "208 East Broadway," by re-creating the living room in which she works. For Part 2, "Suitcase Dreams," at Danspace Project, she adds video shot through her living-room window and sequences created in the more expansive zones of her life as a choreographer: a studio in Amsterdam, a writing class in Ohio, a mountain in Salzburg. Vicky Shick, Jeanine Durning, Deborah Black, and Rethorst herself make up the expert cast. (St. Mark's In-the-Bowery, Second Ave. at 10th St. 212-674-8194. May 29-31 at 8:30.)

"WORKS & PROCESS"
Karole Armitage's ever-restless mind has moved on to theoretical physics, specifically the intractable contradiction between the theories of general relativity and quantum physics. At the Guggenheim, as part of the World Science Festival, Armitage discusses her approach to these knotty issues, as reflected in her current work in progress, "The Elegant Universe." Joining her will be her collaborator, Lukas Ligeti, an avant-garde percussionist and composer fond of polyrhythms, and the physicists Jim Gates and Brian Greene, on May 30 and May 31, respectively, to explain the science. Armitage's smart, fearless dancers will perform excerpts. (Fifth Ave. at 89th St. 212-423-3587. May 30-31 at 7:30.)

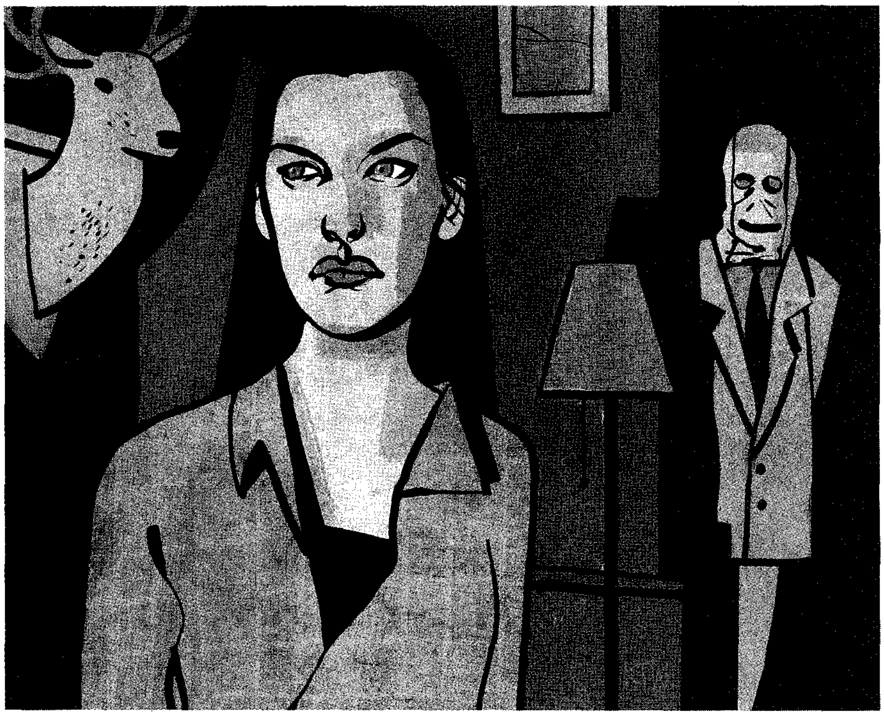
"UPTOWN/DOWNTOWN"
"Uptown" and "downtown" are loose terms in the New York dance world, part geographical, part aesthetic, part economic. Organized by the Lower Manhattan Cultural Council, Harlem Arts Alliance, and the Field, this program offers two evenings of works in progress and includes the choreographers Ashley Byler, Judy Oberfelder, and Naomi Goldberg Haas, as well as the bucket drummer William B. Johnson and the comedienne Connie Perry. (Gatehouse, 150 Convent Ave. May 30 at 7:30; Dance New Amsterdam, 280 Broadway, at Chambers St. May 31 at 7:30. Tickets are available at the box office on the night of the show.)

RIOULT
Sporting a streamlined new name, the company of the consistent craftsman Pascal Rioult tackles the tour de force of Bach's contrapuntal craft, "Art of Fugue," with "Views of the Fleeting World." The program also features two works from the choreographer's Ravel period: "Prelude to Night" and "Bolero." (Skirball Center, 566 LaGuardia Pl. 212-279-4200. June 3 at 7:30. Through June 7.)

CLASSICAL MUSIC

OPERA

BAM: "IL MATRIMONIO SEGRETO"
Though little-known today, the composer Domenico Cimarosa, a contemporary of Mozart, was a favorite of such sensitive listeners as Goethe and Stendhal. "The Secret Marriage," the greatest of Cimarosa's comic operas, comes to the BAM Harvey Theatre in a period production by Jonathan Miller; Paul Goodwin conducts members of the Brooklyn Philharmonic. (651 Fulton St., Brooklyn. 718-636-4100. May 28-31 and June 3-4 at 7:30 and June 1 at 3.)



"The Strangers," directed by Bryan Bertino and starring Liv Tyler, opens May 30.

KYLE T. WEBSTER

THE WESTERN WIND
When Monteverdi was busy inventing opera, at the dawn of the seventeenth century, Adriano Banchieri, an organist, a composer, and a monk, was bringing down the curtain on the "madrigal comedy" with "Barca di Venetia per Padova," a very secular entertainment set on a canal boat embarking from La Serenissima. The adventurous vocal ensemble, making a foray into music theatre, pairs it with "Jukebox in the Tavern of Love," a new work by the avant-garde pioneer Eric Salzman; Valeria Vasilevski directs. (Flea Theatre, 41 White St. 212-226-2407. May 29-30 at 7, May 31 at 3 and 7, and June 1 at 5.)

AMATO OPERA: "COSÌ FAN TUTTE"
Anthony Amato's Lilliputian company, a longtime outfit made up of professionals and eager amateurs, endures decade after decade in its tiny theatre in the East Village. This month, it offers an English-language production of Mozart's enticingly complex battle of the sexes; expect hearty Italian hill-town charm, not polished uptown elegance. (Amato Opera Theatre, 319 Bowery, at 2nd St. 212-228-8200. May 31 at 7:30 and June 1 at 2:30.)

ORCHESTRAS AND CHORUSES

NEW YORK PHILHARMONIC
With Riccardo Muti—the Philharmonic's principal guest conductor in all but name—moving on to the big post at the Chicago Symphony, will David Robertson's star rise? An exuberantly American conductor, he closes two weeks of concerts at Avery Fisher Hall with a program that betrays his thorough familiarity with European modernism: Debussy's twelve Études for piano, orchestrated by the Swiss composer Michael Jarrell, and Schubert's sketches for what would have been a tenth symphony, reworked by Luciano Berio (under the title "Rendering"), along with Beethoven's "Emperor" Concerto (under the knowing hands of Emanuel Ax). (212-875-5656. May 29 at 7:30 and May 30-31 at 8.)

NEW AMSTERDAM SINGERS
Clara Longstreth's excellent avocational chorus, never averse to new music, introduces two recent works to New York, Richard Rodney Bennett's "Nonsense" and Michael Dellaria's "The Masters on the Movies" (a setting of a satirical poem by Richard Howard), in its latest program at Merkin Concert Hall. (129 W. 67th St. 212-501-3330. May 28 at 8.)

THE KNIGHTS
Spearheaded by its two directors, the string-playing brothers Colin and Eric Jacobsen, this young New York chamber orchestra thrives on the joyful virtuosity of its personnel and on an innovative approach to repertory. Its concert at Washington Irving High School begins with Beethoven's "Pastoral" (conducted by Eric Jacobsen) and closes with a set of songs by Christina Courtin, who is not only an up-and-coming pop chanteuse but also a violinist in the orchestra. (16th St. and Irving Pl. 917-478-5341. May 31 at 8.)

AMERICAN SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA
Leon Botstein brings down the curtain on his adventurous orchestra's season with "Spatial Explorations," a concert that not only muses on the nature of the cosmos but also on the humble concert space itself, since the works on the program—including Takemitsu's "Cassiopeia," Panufnik's "Symphony of the Spheres," and Ligeti's radiant "Atmosphères"—require considerably augmented forces. Fortunately, the pianist Blair McMillen and the Dessoff Choirs (not to mention the eight tim-

panists required for Langgaard's "Music of the Spheres") will be there to help out. (Avery Fisher Hall. 212-721-6500. June 1 at 3.)

RUSSIAN CHAMBER CHORUS OF NEW YORK
In "Sunset, Night, Sunrise," Nikolai Kachanov's choir gives New York audiences a powerful dose of Russian melancholy by performing a collection of limpid miniatures by such composers as Arensky, Glinka, Mussorgsky, Rachmaninoff, and Tchaikovsky. (St. Joseph's Church, 371 Sixth Ave. June 1 at 3. Tickets at the door. ♦ Weill Recital Hall, Carnegie Hall. 212-247-7800. June 5 at 8.)

LITTLE ORCHESTRA SOCIETY
Dino Anagnost's longtime ensemble may be best known for its children's concerts, but it plays grownup gigs, too. Its next concert, part of the "Vivaldi's Venice" series, features the engaging violinist Maria Bachmann in three of the composer's concertos. (Zankel Hall. 212-247-7800. June 3 at 7:30.)

RECITALS

LYRIC CHAMBER MUSIC SOCIETY OF NEW YORK
In its tenth anniversary, the organization has embraced music from around the world. Its last concert of the season is a celebration of such Russian composers as Glinka, Tchaikovsky, and Stravinsky ("The Soldier's Tale"), offered by the clarinettist Igor Begelman, the violinist Roman Simovic, and the pianist Tatiana Goncharova; two esteemed traditional performers, Tamara Volskaya (on *domra*) and Anatoliy Trofimov (on *bayan*), will also perform. (Kosciuszko Foundation, 15 E. 65th St. 212-279-4200. May 28 at 7:30.)

ISSUE PROJECT ROOM
Joshua Light Show is a team of improvising video and lighting artists headed by Joshua White, who began his career by collaborating with such artists as Janis Joplin and Jimi Hendrix at Woodstock and the Fillmore East. The group's residency at the Brooklyn avant-garde performance space begins as they provide visual accompaniment to the sounds of an ensemble of New York "all-stars" that features the electronica artist Ikue Mori and the electric harpist Zeena Parkins. (232 3rd St., at Third Ave., 3rd fl. May 28 at 8. For full schedule, see www.issueprojectroom.org.)

GAIL ARCHER
The esteemed young organist has been taking the ecstatic music of Messiaen to some of New York's most distinctive sacred spaces this season; she closes her series, appropriately, at the glorious St. Patrick's Cathedral, performing the composer's "Livre du Saint Sacrement." (Fifth Ave. at 51st St. May 29 at 7. No tickets required.)

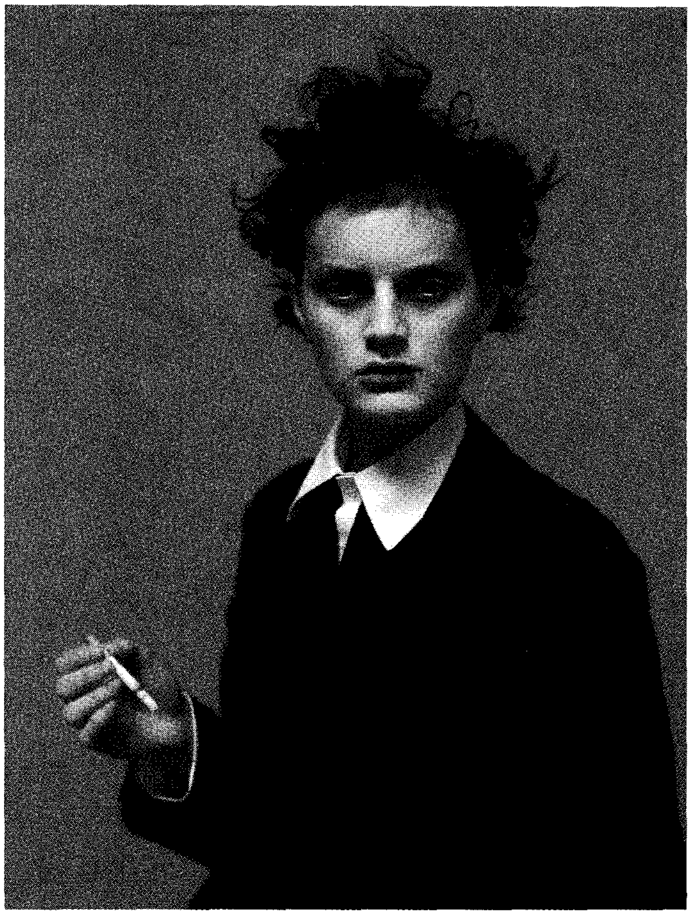
"THE MOVADO HOUR"
The Baryshnikov Arts Center's resident classical series, held in an elegant studio space with a view of the Hudson River, hosts a one-hour concert by three formidable musicians, the violinist Mark Steinberg, the cellist Fred Sherry, and the pianist Jeremy Denk, offering two piano trios by Haydn along with a work by the downtown icon Morton Feldman ("Spring of Chosroes"); a wine reception precedes the concert. (450 W. 37th St. May 30 at 7. To reserve free tickets, which are required, call 917-934-4966.)

BARGEMUSIC
The barge offers the excitement of new music and the comforts of tradition this weekend. May 30 at 8: The pianists Marc Peloquin and Robert Hidalgo continue the barge's "Here and Now" series by performing solo and duo works by such composers as Virgil Thomson, George Crumb, Steven Burke (a world première), and Samuel Barber (the diverting "Souvenirs"). ♦ May 31 at 8 and June 1 at 4: Andy Simionescu and Denis Brott perform Kodály's Duo for Violin and Cello before joining Claude Frank in Beethoven's Piano Trio No. 2 in G Major; Frank will also perform Beethoven's Piano Sonata in A-Flat Major, Op. 110. (Fulton Ferry Landing, Brooklyn. 718-624-2083.)

BANG ON A CAN MARATHON
It's back in all its glory: this year's edition of the all-night, twelve-hour concert of downtown new music features a passel of premières, including a work for eight basses by Julia Wolfe (offered by the Hartt Bass Band), a piece by the Canadian violinist and composer Owen Pallett (a.k.a. Final Fantasy), and a new Annie Gosfield work performed by the pianist Lisa Moore. Other featured groups include So Percussion, Alarm Will Sound, and Signal (performing Steve Reich's "Daniel Variations"); Toby Twining Music will herald the dawn with Stockhausen's mesmerizing choral work "Stimmung." (Winter Garden, World Financial Center, Battery Park City. Beginning May 31 at 6. No tickets required.)

FIREWORKS ENSEMBLE
Two American obsessions, sex and religion, fuel the young group's latest concert of world premières. In "A Field Manual" (which will be expertly intoned by the singers Melissa Fogarty and Chris Pedro Trakas), David Del Tredici sets the brazenly erotic poems of the New York poet Edward Field; Robert Kyr's "Working Fire" and "Fireworks Variations" are based on hymns from the Sacred Harp tradition, but share Del Tredici's neo-Romantic predilection. (Symphony Space, Broadway at 95th St. 212-864-5400. May 31 at 7:30.)

LOCRIAN CHAMBER PLAYERS
Works written in the last decade make up the exclusive diet of this ensemble, long based at Riverside Church. Its next concert features the U.S. première of "Minima Sinfonia," for string quartet and piano, by Henri Pousseur, one of the last surviving members of the generation of modernists who revolutionized the language of music after the Second World War. Also included are the New York première of Yehudi Wyner's "Madrigal" as well as "Special Events," the final work of the late Earle Brown. (91 Claremont Ave., 10th fl. May 31 at 8. No tickets required.)


"Guinevere with a Cigarette," by Paolo Roversi, at Pace/MacGill.

MOVIES OPENING

BIGGER, STRONGER, FASTER*
A documentary, directed by Christopher Bell, about the use of steroids by American athletes. Opening May 30. (Empire 25 and Sunshine Cinema.)

L'ORIGINE DE LA TENDRESSE AND OTHER TALES
A program of six recent short films from France. In French. Opening May 30. (Cinema Village.)

SAVAGE GRACE
Reviewed below in Now Playing. Opening May 30. (IFC Center and 62nd & Broadway.)

SEX AND THE CITY: THE MOVIE
In this adaptation of the television series based on Candace Bushnell's book, a writer and her friends juggle love and work in New York. Written and directed by Michael Patrick King; starring Sarah Jessica Parker, Kim Cattrall, Kristin Davis, Cynthia Nixon, and Chris Noth. Opening May 30. (In wide release.)

THE STRANGERS
A horror film, directed by Bryan Bertino, about a couple who are attacked by intruders in an isolated vacation home. Starring Scott Speedman and Liv Tyler. Opening May 30. (In wide release.)

STUCK
A drama about a hit-and-run driver who becomes involved with her victim. Directed by Stuart Gordon; starring Stephen Rea and Mena Suvari. Opening May 30. (Angelika Film Center.)

THE UNKNOWN WOMAN
Giuseppe Tornatore directed this drama, about a Ukrainian émigrée in Italy (Xenia Rappaport) who ingratiates herself with a wealthy family. In Italian. Opening May 30. (Angelika Film Center.)

NOW PLAYING

BLACK NARCISSUS
This lush 1947 adaptation of Rumer Godden's 1939 novel, about Anglican nuns wrestling with the sensuality that surrounds their Himalayan mission, keeps the screen aglow and the mind agog. Made by the British producing-directing-writing team the Archers (Michael Powell and Emeric Pressburger), it's about faith and temptation; much of the Archers' career is summed up when a British estate manager (David Farrar) tells the Sister Superior (a suggestively tense Deborah Kerr), "There's something in the atmosphere that makes everything seem exaggerated." Without leaving England, Powell and Pressburger created a rapturous landscape whose colors seem to spill over onto the nuns' off-white habits. Filmed in Pinewood Studios and the Leonardslee Gardens, in Horsham, this is a landmark of Hollywood-on-Thames trompe-l'oeil. With Flora Robson, Kathleen Byron, Sabu, and Jean Simmons (as a native girl).—*Michael Sragow* (Rubin Museum; May 30.)

THE CHRONICLES OF NARNIA: PRINCE CASPIAN
The abrupt time shifts from England during the Second World War to Narnia's mythical past, and then back again, are bewildering to the uninitiated, but this latest C. S. Lewis adaptation is an acceptable grand-scale entertainment, with many overloaded battle scenes, talking centaurs, and digital duelling mice standing on their hind legs. Will the dark-bearded, vaguely Spanish Telmarines succeed in exterminating the woodland creatures, the Narnians?

Prince Caspian (Ben Barnes), a great-looking Telmarine with heroic hair, switches sides and fights alongside the Narnians and their young kings and queens, who have returned from their own world. With the Italian actor Sergio Castellitto, as the gloomy, power-mad usurper Miraz, and Peter Dinklage, as the ill-tempered dwarf Trumpkin. Directed by Andrew Adamson, who wrote the script with Christopher Markus and Stephen McFeely. Karl Walter Lindenlaub is the director of photography.—*David Denby* (In wide release.)

THE EDGE OF HEAVEN

A challenging new film from the director Fatih Akin, who revisits the ground that he covered so forcefully three years ago in "Head-On." The story splits its time between northern Germany, where a prostitute (Nursel Köse) enters the lives of a lecherous widower (Tuncel Kurtiz) and his sombre, studious son (Baki Davrak), and Istanbul, where the prostitute's daughter (Nurgül Yeşilçay) is living a threatened existence. She is a political activist, but the fire in her seems to spread beyond politics; you feel it blazing into love when she flees Turkey for Hamburg and meets an equally hot-hearted young student (Patrycia Ziolkowska). Throughout the movie, people tack back and forth between the two countries, as if trying and failing to find safe haven; if any calm does emerge from such desperation, it comes from Hanna Schygulla, who returns to the screen with an extraordinary depiction of both bewilderment and strength. In her role as the student's mother, she helps Akin to suggest, once again, the enormous distances, geographical and spiritual, that people of every age and background can travel—surprising themselves in the act of transformation. In Turkish, German, and English.—*Anthony Lane* (5/26/08) (Film Forum.)

HAROLD & KUMAR ESCAPE FROM GUANTANAMO BAY

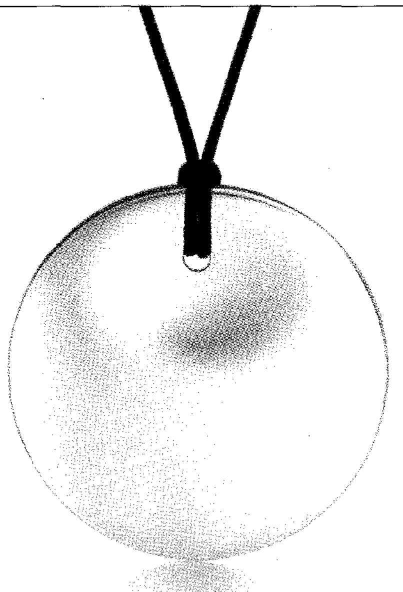
This cinematic burlesque show, in which the baggy pants keep dropping and occasionally fall off altogether, is perhaps the first bottomless comedy—much of the humor, and a fair amount of the nakedness, is concentrated below the belt. Harold (John Cho), a Korean-American financial guy, and Kumar (Kal Penn), an Indian-American would-be medical student, run afoul of the war on terror, get sent to Guantánamo, escape to the mainland, and wander around the South. The writer-director team of Jon Hurwitz and Hayden Schlossberg, who also wrote (but did not direct) "Harold & Kumar Go to White Castle," have no better than primitive skills. By any rational standard, it's a terrible piece of work, yet its heart is in the right place. The chief fool here is a paranoid Homeland Security official (Rob Corddry), who sees everyone but whites as foreigners and likely terrorist collaborators. The Harold & Kumar movies, in their slovenly way, mark the transition to a post-racial society in which, as the *Salon* movie critic Stephanie Zacharek put it, "no one in real life can say definitively what an American looks like."—*D.D.* (5/19/08) (In wide release.)

INDIANA JONES AND THE KINGDOM OF THE CRYSTAL SKULL

Reviewed this week in The Current Cinema. (In wide release.)

IRON MAN

Robert Downey, Jr., as Tony Stark, billionaire arms manufacturer and playboy, almost completely dominates this whooshing junk pile. Nothing matters to Tony except inventing things and having a good time, and Downey, muttering to himself, ignores everyone else in the movie for as long as he can. Fixing his eyes at last on another character, he seems faintly annoyed that his privacy has been violated. Yet he delivers—to the camera, and to us. In this updating of the Marvel Comics character (who first appeared in 1963), Tony gets captured by wild-eyed fanatics who hang out in Afghan caves; they command him to make missiles out of scraps, but instead he creates a huge suit of armor and climbs into it. The monster shoots bullets and emits liquid flames from his gauntlets, and when he gets bored he just flies away. This superhero has no vulnerabilities or specialized skills; he's an all-purpose fighting vehicle—an airborne RoboCop. Most of the digital special effects look cheesy, and Terrence Howard and Gwyneth Paltrow drag themselves through em-



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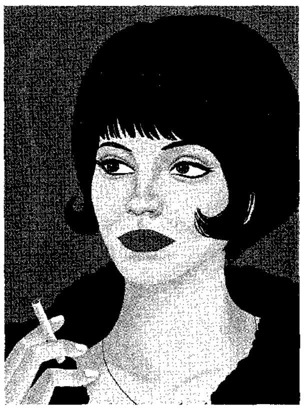
MOVADO
60 YEARS OF MODERN DESIGN

CRITIC'S NOTEBOOK
'TIS PITY

In "Vivre Sa Vie" (1962), Jean-Luc Godard's fourth feature (at Film Forum, May 30 through June 5), Nana (Anna Karina), broke and thrown out of her apartment, becomes a Paris streetwalker. In a café, she falls into conversation with a philosopher (the actual philosopher Brice Parain), who urges on her the value of experience, of seeking truth through error, of going through periods of detachment before speaking. Nana is in despair because she cannot say exactly what she means and would prefer to say nothing rather than betray herself. This amazing conversation contrasts a humanistic and a fatalistic view of life. The latter wins out: the film is a portrait of Nana not so much gathered but dissolved into twelve episodes, which examine her from every viewpoint (including the back of her head) and deliver her to her fate. Despite Godard's many distancing devices and dissociations (separating sound and image, allowing people to walk out of the frame as they speak), Karina's vivacity and soulfulness unify the portrait and make the ending one to grieve over.

—*David Denby*



barrassing roles, but Jeff Bridges, as Obadiah Stane, Tony's treacherous No. 2 at the arms company, performs with professional skill. Directed by Jon Favreau.—*D.D.* (5/5/08) (In wide release.)

THE LIFE OF OHARU
A fifty-year-old prostitute who lives on the street and can no longer attract men shuffles to a temple with her humble dignity intact. Most of what follows in Kenji Mizoguchi's justly legendary 1952 drama of political and intimate corruption tells, in flashback, the story of the scourging of a pure soul. Oharu (Kinuyo Tanaka), a courtier's daughter in seventeenth-century Kyoto, is caught with Katsunosuke (Toshiro Mifune), a lowly page. Despite their true love, they cannot marry; Oharu and her family are degraded and exiled, and Katsunosuke is beheaded. As Oharu runs grief-stricken through the underbrush after hearing of her lover's death, Mizoguchi's relentless tracking shot, one of many, exalts her desperate, doomed flight from cruel authority. Ultimately pushed into prostitution to satisfy her father's debts, Oharu bears her swift and inexorable decline with a stoic serenity born of the memory of love. Mizoguchi's limpid heartbreaker is also a fierce denunciation of the subjugation of women, the power of wealth, and Japan's unjust though splendid traditions. In Japanese.—*Richard Brody* (IFC Center; May 30-June 1.)

MY FATHER MY LORD
David Volach's first feature film, about Menachem (Ilan Griff), the increasingly skeptical only child of an ultra-Orthodox rabbi and scholar in Jerusalem, is basically a very slick student film, sentimental and overdemonstrative. But Volach, who comes from a family like Menachem's, seems to have made his film under the pressure of great inner necessity, bearing tender yet ambivalent witness to a world that he knows intimately. A pair of scenes showing the teaching of religious doctrine—one, for children, concerning Abraham's willingness to sacrifice Isaac, and another, for adults, about the righteous men for whom the world was created—deftly suggest his view of the power and the limitations of the big ideas at work in traditional Judaism. Within the style and framework of a manipulative melodrama, Volach lets loose a cry: that the unyielding strictures of religious doctrine and practice are killing the best of youth. In Hebrew and Yiddish.—*R.B.* (Lincoln Plaza Cinemas.)

NOISE
An antic philosophical comedy about a frustrated New Yorker, David Owen (Tim Robbins), who is going nuts from the city racket, especially car alarms, which, easily set off, interrupt his lovemaking with his wife, among many other things. He attacks the throbbing vehicles with bats and hammers; he slashes tires and snips wires, and jumps up and down on hoods like a drunken teen-ager. Famous throughout the city as the Rectifier, he stalks around at night like Batman, provoking the mayor (William Hurt) to rage. The writer-director, Henry Bean ("The Believer"), has an unsteady touch; the picture moves back and forth between farce and celebration of urban activism, but Bean has a feeling for the comedy and stress of life in the city. The movie is pretty consistently entertaining. Robbins can seem mulish and out of it, but then, as an impish grin takes over his face, he suddenly becomes inspired. With Bridget Moynahan, as his wife, and the vibrantly intelligent and beautiful Margarita Levieva, as the soulful young Russian writer and philosophy student he has a fling with.—*D.D.* (5/19/08) (Empire 25 and Village Theatre VII.)

REPRISE
Joachim Trier's pseudo-intellectual, faux-modernist pastiche of New Wave moods and tricks tells the schematic story of two young writers in Oslo, lifelong friends whose careers intertwine and diverge. Phillip (Anders Danielsen Lie), the first to be published, goes mad and stops writing, ostensibly owing to his tempestuous relationship with Kari (Viktoria Winge), of which little is seen. Erik (Espen Klouman-Høiner), more sober and straightforward, earns acclaim a bit later but wonders whether his work isn't merely derivative of two local writers, Sten Egil Dahl (a recluse whose name and persona are reminiscent of Jean-Luc Godard) and Tor Ulven (sounds like "Truffaut"). Both Phillip and Erik are obsessed with Paris, and Trier is dazzled by his own virtuosity—he films scenes in the conditional tense, apostrophized by an arch voice-over—but his film lacks any trace of the spontaneity, the cinematic savvy, or the self-revealing emotional openness of the French New Wave's masterworks. Moreover, for a film about writing, it's oddly disrespectful of it: when Phillip, after a long layoff, sits down at his computer again, we never find out what he comes up with. Trier and his co-scenarist, Eskil Vogt, have a keen sense of the rivalries and resentments at work in an ingrown circle of friends, but the vain gamesmanship pushes it to the sidelines. In Norwegian.—*R.B.* (Lincoln Plaza Cinemas and Sunshine Cinema.)

SAVAGE GRACE
Based on a true story, though its moldy glamour-of-decadence mood comes straight from the movies. Julianne Moore plays the poor Irish beauty Barbara Daly, who, in the thirties, marries Brooks Baekeland (Stephen Dillane), a passively egotistical heir to a great fortune. Brooks is some kind of dilettante explorer; he lives in high style but has no interest in pleasing his demanding and theatrical wife, who makes scenes in public and embarrasses him. They travel from one vacation spot to another with their hothouse-plant son, Tony (Eddie Redmayne), who grows up intelligent, gay, and very much obsessed with his miserably unhappy mother. Pretty young lovers join them—it's an everyone-sleeps-with-everyone movie, though the droopy narration, taken from Tony's letters to his father, couldn't be more anti-sexual. The director, Tom Kalin, has an elegant eye for perfect beauty in apartments, hotel suites, and Spanish vacation houses, and Moore has a few scenes of vibrant neurotic rage, but the movie feels enervated and pointless. None of these people does anything worth caring about. Howard Rodman adapted the book of the same title by Natalie Robins and Steven M. L. Aronson.—*D.D.* (IFC Center and 62nd & Broadway.)

SHOWMAN
Before making "Salesman," their famous documentary about door-to-door Bible peddlers, the Maysles brothers, Albert and David, directed this portrait of the wheeler-dealer film distributor and producer Joseph E. Levine, which covers similar ground but from the top down. After years as a hustling film booker in his native New England, Levine made a name with "Godzilla" and a fortune with "Hercules," and is captured here at work in 1962 masterminding the American release of "Two Women," a film by Vittorio De Sica starring Sophia Loren, with a similar blend of savvy and hucksterism—as well as with an army of reps equipped with a modern industrial panoply of facts and figures. (The film's note of elegy for the end of old Hollywood and the coming of a streamlined, corporate industry would be struck even more deeply by the next product of Levine's partnership with Loren's husband, the producer Carlo Ponti, Jean-Luc Godard's "Contempt"). Loren is often around (one of her junkets opens the film), and her magical allure contrasts painfully with the grungy yet hard-nosed milieu that brings it to the screen (so does a cameo by Kim Novak, clever, unvarnished, and electrifying). Profiles of Levine in this magazine and elsewhere bring to light a flamboyant vulgarity that here, intensely aware of Albert Maysles's probing camera, he keeps under wraps, but his lascivious grin as he describes Loren's appearance suggests exactly where art and commerce intersect.—*R.B.* (IFC Center; June 3.)

SON OF RAMBOW
For forty minutes or so, Garth Jennings's film about childhood—to be specific, about the place of film in childhood—unfolds with tenderness, style, and wit. The place is provincial England, the time is the nineteen-eighties, and the hero is Will Proudfoot (Bill Milner), a shy and studious boy who lives with his mother among the Plymouth Brethren, a religious sect. Still, he attends a normal school, even if he has to leave the class whenever the others are watching a videotape (TV being a device of the Devil). Will meets, fights, and befriends another pupil, Lee Carter (Will Poulter), a

DIVYA SRINIVASAN

rebellious soul from a messed-up family. Together, the unlikely duo decide to shoot their own version of the Sylvester Stallone vehicle "Rambo: First Blood"—not just Will's favorite film but the only one he has ever seen. As homages go, this one feels both wild and innocent, and some sequences are invaded by bursts of graphics and cartoons—what better image for the restless junior mind? Once the boys' filming starts, however, and other characters and mini-plots are filtered into the action, the movie, sadly, loses both charm and grip. The slapstick grows too silly to be convincing, and, as with the recent "Be Kind Rewind," we are left with an insoluble puzzle: how do you stop a film about amateurs from sliding into the clunky?—*A.L.* (Angelika Film Center and Lincoln Square.)

SPEED RACER
The Wachowski brothers, picking up where they left off with the "Matrix" trilogy, resume the task of bludgeoning our senses into submission. Their weapon of choice on this occasion is the race car—or, rather, a computer-generated parody of a car, as curvy and unstoppable as a child's dream of velocity, surging around a virtual track and clashing with its rivals. The hero really is called Speed Racer (Emile Hirsch), a name that more or less defines his career options. His dearest wish is to become world champion and thus repay the loving confidence of his parents (John Goodman and Susan Sarandon). The world conjured up and customized for the film is blindingly bright, caught between the goofy and the slick, but, like even the best Hawaiian shirt, it quickly tires the eye, and the story, which should surely match the clean lines of the vehicles, feels muddy with complication; do kids in the audience really want to hear about automotive share prices? The villain, personified by Roger Allam, turns out to represent big business: an interesting choice of target for a major motion picture. With Christina Ricci; or, at any rate, a perfect clone, declawed and unsexed, pretending to be her.—*A.L.* (5/12/08) (In wide release.)

Also Playing

THE CHILDREN OF HUANG SHI: In wide release. **MADE OF HONOR:** In wide release. **SANGRE DE MI SANGRE:** IFC Center. **WAR, INC.:** Angelika Film Center.

REVIVALS, CLASSICS, ETC.

Titles with a dagger are reviewed above.

ANTHOLOGY FILM ARCHIVES
32 Second Ave., at 2nd St. (212-505-5181)—Special screenings. May 28 at 7 and May 29 at 7:30: "Dr. Chicago" (1968, George Manupelli). ♦ "Essential Cinema." May 31 at 4:30: Short films by Louis and Auguste Lumière (1896-1900; silent). ♦ June 1 at 5: Short-film program, including "Anemic Cinema" (1926, Marcel Duchamp and Man Ray; silent).

BAM ROSE CINEMAS
30 Lafayette Ave., Brooklyn (718-636-4100)—"Sundance Institute at BAM." May 29 at 8: "American Teen" (2008, Nanette Burstein). ♦ May 30 at 6:30 and May 31 at 12:30: "Good Dick" (2008, Marianna Palka). ♦ May 30 at 9:30: "Man on Wire" (2008, James Marsh). ♦ May 31 at 3:15: "Gonzo: The Life and Work of Dr. Hunter S. Thompson" (2008, Alex Gibney). ♦ May 31 at 9: "Ballast" (2008, Lance Hammer). ♦ June 2 at 6:40: "The Linguists" (2008, Seth Kramer, Daniel A. Miller, and Jeremy Newberger). ♦ June 2 at 9:40: "American Son" (2008, Neil Abramson). ♦ June 3 at 6:40: "Sleep Dealer" (2008, Alex Rivera).

FILM FORUM
W. Houston St. west of Sixth Ave. (212-727-8110)—Through June 5: "Godard's 60s." May 28-June 3 at 1, 4:40, and 8:20: "Two or Three Things I Know About Her" (1966; in French). ♦ May 28-June 3 at 2:45, 6:25, and 10:10: "La Chinoise" (1967; in French). ♦ May 28-29 at 1:30, 3:30, 5:30, 7:30, and 9:30: "Contempt" (1963; in French, English, German, and Italian). ♦ May 30-June 5 at 1, 2:45, 4:30, 6:15, 8, and 9:45: "Vivre Sa Vie" (1962; in French).

FRENCH INSTITUTE ALLIANCE FRANÇAISE
Florence Gould Hall, 55 E. 59th St. (212-355-6160)—"Homage to Yves Montand." June 3 at 12:30, 4, and 7:30: "The Wages of Fear" (1953, Henri-Georges Clouzot; in French).

IFC CENTER
323 Sixth Ave., at W. 3rd St. (212-924-7771)—The films of Kenji Mizoguchi. May 30-June 1 at 11 A.M.: "The Life of Oharu" (†). ♦ "Waverly Midnights." May 30-31: "Battlestar Galactica" (1978, Richard A. Colla). ♦ "Stranger Than Fiction," a documentary series. June 3 at 8: "Showman" (†) and "Psychiatry in Russia" (1955, Albert Maysles), introduced by Albert Maysles.

MUSEUM OF MODERN ART
Roy and Niuta Titus Theatres, 11 W. 53rd St. (212-708-9480)—"ContemporAsian." May 28 and June 2 at 6, May 29 at 8:30, May 30 at 8, May 31 at 7:30, and June 1 at 2: "Mukhsin" (2006, Yasmin Ahmad; in Malay, English, and Mandarin). ♦ "Jazz Score." May 28 at 6 and May 31 at 6:45: "The Gauntlet" (1977, Clint Eastwood). ♦ May 28 at 6:15 and May 31 at 4: "Bullitt" (1968, Peter Yates). ♦ June 1 at 2:30: "The Criminal," a.k.a. "The Concrete Jungle" (1960, Joseph Losey). ♦ June 1 at 5: "Alfie" (1966, Lewis Gilbert). ♦ "The Bourne Trilogy." May 29 at 6 and May 30 at 5: "The Bourne Identity" (2002, Doug Liman). ♦ May 31 at 2: "The Bourne Supremacy" (2004, Paul Greengrass). ♦ May 31 at 5: "The Bourne Ultimatum" (2007, Greengrass). ♦ Special screening. June 1 at 4:30: "My Hustler" (1965, Andy Warhol and Chuck Wein).

RUBIN MUSEUM OF ART
150 W. 17th St. (212-620-5000, ext. 344)—"Cabaret Cinema." May 30 at 9:30: "Black Narcissus" (†), introduced by the musician Ben Taylor.

SNUG HARBOR CULTURAL CENTER
1000 Richmond Terrace, Staten Island (718-425-3509)—International Documentary Film Festival of Florence. For complete program information, visit www.festivaldeipopoli.org/index_eng.html. May 29 at 7: "Lonely Boy" (1962, Wolf Koenig and Roman Kroitor). ♦ May 30 at 5: "Political Activism—Chronicles of Red Tuscany" (2005, Hugues Le Paige; in Italian and French.) ♦ May 30 at 6:45: "Losing the Thread" (2000, Jonathan Nossiter; in English and Italian). ♦ May 30 at 9: "Ellis Island Tales" (1980, Robert Bober; in French). ♦ May 31 at 3: "Un Petit Monastère en Toscane" (1988, Otar Iosseliani; in French). ♦ May 31 at 9: "Profile of a Peace Parade" (1967, David Loeb Weiss) and "Lost Book Found" (1996, Jem Cohen). ♦ May 31 at 9: "The Last Victory" (2003, John Appel).

SUNSHINE CINEMA
143 E. Houston St. (212-330-8182)—"Sunshine@Midnight." May 30-31: "To Catch a Thief" (1955, Alfred Hitchcock).

WALTER READE THEATRE
Lincoln Center (212-875-5600)—"Israel @ 60." Except where noted, all films are in Hebrew. May 28 at 2 and May 29 at 8:30: "Three Mothers" (2006, Dina Zvi-Riklis). ♦ May 28 at 4:15 and May 31 at 9:20: "Late Marriage" (2001, Dover Koshashvili; in Georgian and Hebrew). ♦ May 29 at 1:30 and May 31 at 4:20: "Live and Become" (2005, Radu Mihaileanu; in Amharic, Hebrew, and French). ♦ May 29 at 4:15 and May 31 at 7:20: "Campfire" (2004, Joseph Cedar). ♦ May 29 at 6:20 and June 2 at 2: "Avenge But One of My Two Eyes" (2005, Avi Mograbi). ♦ May 30 at 2 and June 1 at 3:40: "Close to Home" (2006, Vidi Bilu and Dalia Hager). ♦ May 30 at 4:10 and May 31 at 2: "Thirst" (2004, Tawfik Abu Wael; in Arabic). ♦ May 30 at 2 and June 1 at 9:15: "Disengagement" (2007, Amos Gitai; in Hebrew, English, French, Italian, and Arabic). ♦ May 30 at 9:15 and June 1 at noon: "The Inner Tour" (2001, Ra'anan Alexandrowicz; in Arabic and Hebrew). ♦ June 1 at 2: "Purity: Breaking the Codes of Silence" (2002, Anat Zuria). ♦ June 1 at 7:30: "Checkpoint" (2003, Yoav Shamir). ♦ June 2 at 4:15: "Or (My Treasure)" (2004, Keren Yedaya). ♦ June 2 at 6:30: "Kaddim Wind: Moroccan Chronicles" (2002, David Benchetrit).

TABLES FOR TWO
CAFÉ KATJA

SARAH MANGERSON

79 Orchard St. (212-219-9545)—Johannes Kepler used the figure *panis quadragesimalis*—the Lenten pretzel—to illustrate the knotty path certain planets would have to take to circle the Earth, but supposing the pretzel, not the sun, is the center of the universe, then Erwin Schrottner, the owner of Café Katja, might be its Copernicus, the guy who has it all figured out. The pretzels at Katja bear little resemblance to petrified pushcart versions; they're not jawbreakers, in the Snyder's mode, nor soggy, like Auntie Anne's, with superfluous glucosey glop. Don't expect mustard, either. Toasty little twisters, they come with pots of sweet *Liptauer*, seasoned with onions, chives, paprika, and caraway seeds. *Guten Appetit!*

Schrottner, along with a partner, Andrew Chase, opened the place in the fall, though a catering company that he owns, in midtown, "provides the bread every day that my family lives off." Schrottner presides over the small, stylish dining room (lace curtains, pinecones, a panoramic poster *von der Schmittenhöhe*) most nights, decked in foresty woollens, as if he had just stepped out of Loden-Plankl. He conceived of Katja as "a home away from home for Austrians," and named it after one of his three daughters. Hesitantly, he larded the menu with the staples of his native Graz (where Kepler was banished in 1600 for refusing to convert to Catholicism): speck, blood sausage, beef cheeks, spätzle. To his surprise, even the liver dishes—for instance, the wonderful, spreadable liverwurst with red-onion jam, a decadent peanut butter and jelly—have gone over *wunderbar*. "I don't think there's anything a New Yorker won't eat," Schrottner said.

Or drink, evidently. Spurred, perhaps, by the beer selection—Samichlaus, Stiegl, Gösser—or the staff's perfect ceremonial pours, a swarm of transplanted Austrians, the other night, persuaded Schrottner to dust off the two-liter glass that he customarily stows, drunk-proof, on top of a high shelf. The vessel, a Hans-and-Franz-scaled monster, is known as "the boot" (Schrottner pronounces it "poot"), and draining it is indeed a hollow-legged endeavor. The house champ, Schrottner said, is an American who finished a bootful of Gösser in 1:27. The Austrians began belting out Austro-pop hits ("Wieder Hoam," by Hubert von Goisern; Wolfgang Ambros's "Du Verstehst Mi Ned"), and everyone sang along. For dessert, there was Linzer torte and buckwheat cake, with a pompadour of schlag. A request for Schrottner: next time, how about a choco-pretzel? (Open Mondays through Saturdays for dinner, Sundays for brunch and dinner. Entrées $7-$16.)

—*Lauren Collins*

READINGS AND TALKS

MUSEUM OF THE CITY OF NEW YORK
In conjunction with its new exhibit, "Catholics in New York 1808-1946," the museum is screening "On the Waterfront," whose Father Barry character was based on the Jesuit priest and activist John M. Corridan (1911-1984). Budd Schulberg, the author of the screenplay, will be on hand for a discussion, and the exhibit will be open for viewing. (Museum of the City of New York, Fifth Ave. at 103rd St. 212-534-1672. May 28 at 6:30.)

KGB BAR
Leni Zumas and Christine Schutt read from their fiction. (85 E. 4th St. No tickets necessary. May 28 at 7.)

HOUSING WORKS BOOKSTORE CAFÉ
The poets Meghan O'Rourke, Mary Jo Bang, Cate Marvin, and Philip Nikolayev read from their work. (126 Crosby St. No tickets necessary. May 28 at 7.)

"THALIA BOOK CLUB"
For his new book, "Breach of Peace: Portraits of the 1961 Mississippi Freedom Riders," Eric Etheridge photographed a hundred of the protesters who were arrested during the early years of the civil-rights movement. On May 28 at 7:30, he'll be joined by the riders Albert Gordon, Hezekiah Watkins, and Joan Pleune, for a look back. (Thalia Theatre, Symphony Space, Broadway at 95th St. 212-864-5400.)

TOWN HALL
The Nation Institute presents "True Crimes: The Untold Story Behind the Devastation of Iraq," a discussion between the writers Chris Hedges, Laila Al-Arian, Jeremy Scahill, and Seymour Hersh. (123 W. 43rd St. 212-840-2824. June 3 at 7.)

ABOVE AND BEYOND

WORLD SCIENCE FESTIVAL
Neurologists, paleontologists, cosmologists, theoretical physicists, and scientists of all stripes meet up with writers, dancers, musicians, and other artists at this inspired gathering. (May 28-June 1. For more information, visit www.worldsciencefestival.com.)

"WHITMAN'S BROOKLYN"
May 31 is Walt Whitman's birthday (his hundred and eighty-ninth), and to mark the occasion the architectural critic Francis Morrone is leading a tour of places in Kings County where the poet lived and worked. (For more information, visit www.bcue.org.)

"HOT & HOLY HIGHLINE REVIVAL"
The Reverend Billy, a fervent and towering activist (otherwise known as the performance artist Bill Talen) who preaches an anticonsumerism gospel, and his Stop Shopping Gospel Choir celebrate the DVD release of their 2007 documentary, "What Would Jesus Buy?," which was produced by Morgan Spurlock, of "Super Size Me" fame. (Highline Ballroom, 431 W. 16th St. 212-414-5994. June 1 at 2.)

AUCTIONS AND ANTIQUES
With interest growing in twentieth-century Latin-American art, **Christie's** is holding a two-day sale (May 28-29) of more than three hundred lots, with a high concentration of Mexican and Cuban paintings, by such artists as Rivera, Carrington, and Carreño. Leading the field is a work by Rufino Tamayo (one of eight in the sale), the Fauve-inspired "Trovador," from 1945; it is being sold off, despite considerable opposition, by the museum of Randolph College to benefit the school's endowment. The ubiquitous Botero is represented—surprise!—by a monumental bronze rendition of a curvaceous woman (this one is arranging her hair), "Donna in Piedi." The following week, rugs and carpets go on sale (June 3), including a cluster of specimens from the Doris Duke collection (among them an early-seventeenth-century silk Isfahan rug). (20 Rockefeller Plaza, at 49th St. 212-636-2000.) ♦ The selection of Latin-American art at **Sotheby's** (May 29-30) is also well stocked with paintings by Tamayo, one of which, the comic-sinister "El Comedor de Sandías," from 1949, is the sale's top lot. The house also offers a healthy group of twentieth-century abstract canvases by such painters as the Uruguayan Joaquín Torres-García and the Argentine modernist Emilio Pettoruti, as well as the requisite Boteros (both paintings and sculptures). The gilded elegance of French rococo and Empire drawing rooms pervades the house's sale of French furniture and decorations on June 3. (York Ave. at 72nd St. 212-606-7000.) ♦ Sixty-seven galleries specializing in high-concept jewelry (like the Fire Water Necklace, by Dan Jocz), furniture, and decorative objects, fashioned out of such materials as ceramic, glass, metal, and wood, will tread the fine line between craft and art at the annual **SOFA New York** fair (as in Sculpture, Objects, and Functional Art) at the Park Avenue Armory (May 29-June 1). (Park Ave. at 67th St. 800-563-7632.)

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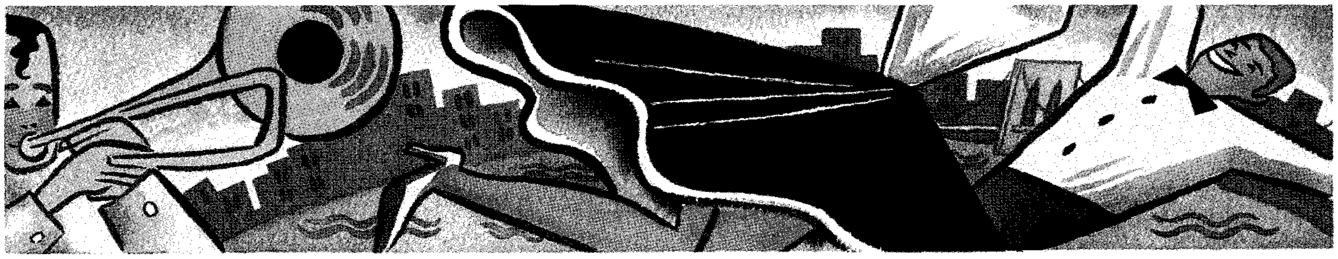


MARCELLUS HALL

ON THE HORIZON

ABOVE AND BEYOND
SWING TIME
June 7-8

Governors Island hosts a Jazz Age Lawn Party, featuring swing dancing to Michael Arenella and his Dreamland Orchestra, a pie-baking contest, croquet games, and an exhibit of vintage cars. (www.dreamlandorchestra.com.)

MOVIES
AUTEUR, AUTEUR
June 13-July 3

The Directors' Fortnight, the Cannes Film Festival's artistically ambitious sidebar, got started forty years ago. BAM presents highlights from its programs, including Alain Tanner's "The Salamander," Nagisa Oshima's "Death by Hanging," and Béla Tarr's "The Werckmeister Harmonies." (718-636-4100.)

CLASSICAL MUSIC
JUMBO
June 20

For four decades, the Metropolitan Opera's park concerts have been a mainstay of the summer season in New York City and beyond. This year, however, the Peter Gelb regime is boldly breaking with tradition, offering only a single monster concert in Prospect Park, expected to draw more than a hundred thousand spectators and featuring Roberto Alagna and Angela Gheorghiu. (www.metoperafamily.org.)

ART
GROUPTHINK
June 27-Aug. 10

The hoi polloi take the curatorial reins in "Click!," at the Brooklyn Museum, a photography exhibition inspired by James Surowiecki's book "The Wisdom of Crowds." Earlier this year, artists submitted work electronically in an open call, and the public evaluated the images online. The size of the pictures in the show will reflect their relative ranking. (718-638-5000.)

NIGHT LIFE
DON'T DON'T GO
July 16-17 and July 19

Yaz, the seductively dour British dance-pop duo of Vince Clarke and Alison Moyet, responsible for hits like "Don't Go" and "Situation," has reunited for the first time in twenty-five years. They are performing at Terminal 5 and the Beacon Theatre. (212-260-4700.)

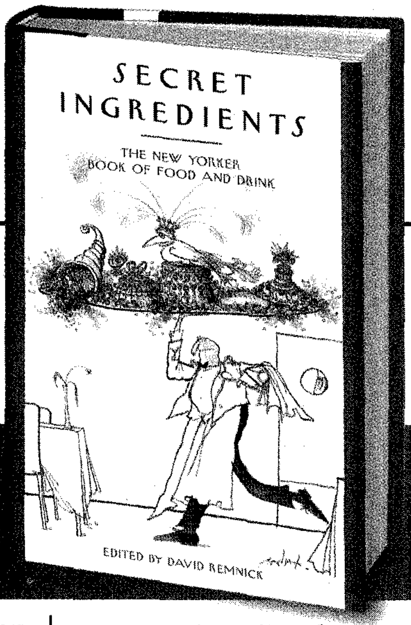
Jazz Age Lawn Party, on Governors Island.

A FEAST OF DELICIOUS WRITING ON FOOD AND DRINK,
SEASONED WITH A GENEROUS DASH OF CARTOONS.

THE MENU

WOODY ALLEN .... on dieting the Dostoyevsky way
ROGER ANGELL .... on the art of the Martini
JULIAN BARNES .... on a gourmand's final diet
NOAH BAUMBACH .... on the Zagat history of my last relationship
ANTHONY BOURDAIN .... on what you don't want to know about restaurants
BILL BUFORD .... on oysters
JOHN CHEEVER .... on the sorrows of gin
ROALD DAHL .... on a connoisseur unmasked
DON DeLILLO .... on Jell-O
M.F.K. FISHER .... on the trouble with tripe
MALCOLM GLADWELL .... on building a better ketchup
ADAM GOPNIK .... on the crisis in French cooking
JIM HARRISON .... on his thirty-seven-course lunch
JANE KRAMER .... on the writer's kitchen
ANTHONY LANE .... on cooking by the book
CHANG-RAE LEE .... on eating sea urchin
A. J. LIEBLING .... on Paris and appetite
JANET MALCOLM ...... on the Alice B. Toklas cookbook
STEVE MARTIN .... on menu mores
ALICE McDERMOTT .... on sex and ice cream
JOHN McPHEE .... on Euell Gibbons, master forager
JOSEPH MITCHELL .. on the beefsteak clubs of New York
SUSAN ORLEAN ..... on the homesick Cuban restaurant
DOROTHY PARKER .... on dinner conversation
S. J. PERELMAN .... on a hollandaise assassin
CALVIN TRILLIN .... on New York's best bagel

AND
MUCH
MORE



Selected from the magazine's plentiful larder,
Secret Ingredients celebrates all forms of gustatory delight:
humor pieces • *cartoons* • *classic profiles of great chefs and great eaters* • memoirs • short stories • poems • offerings from every age of THE NEW YORKER's eighty-year history

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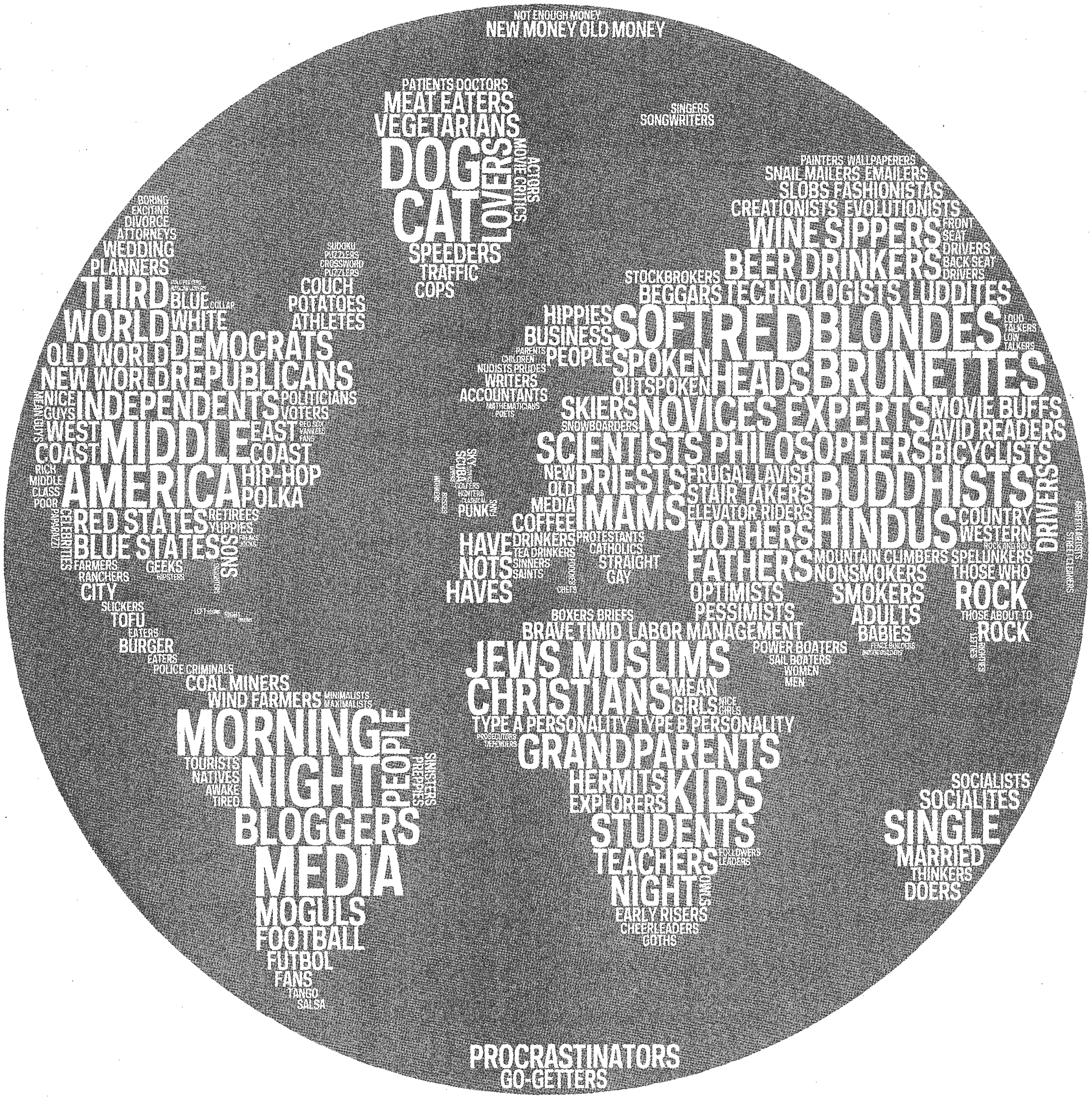
NOT ENOUGH MONEY
NEW MONEY OLD MONEY
PATIENTS DOCTORS
MEAT EATERS
VEGETARIANS
DOG
CAT
LOVERS
MOVIE CRITICS
ACTORS
SPEEDERS
TRAFFIC
COPS
SINGERS
SONGWRITERS
PAINTERS WALLPAPERERS
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SLOBS FASHIONISTAS
CREATIONISTS EVOLUTIONISTS
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DIVORCE
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WHITE
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CROSSWORD PUZZLERS
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POLITICIANS
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NEW WORLD
NICE GUYS
MEAN GUYS
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GEEKS
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EATERS
BURGER
EATERS
POLICE CRIMINALS
COAL MINERS
WIND FARMERS
MINIMALISTS
MAXIMALISTS
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NUDISTS PRUDES
WRITERS
ACCOUNTANTS
MATHEMATICIANS
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SPOKEN
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HEADS
BRUNETTES
SKIERS
SNOWBOARDERS
NOVICES EXPERTS
MOVIE BUFFS
AVID READERS
SCIENTISTS PHILOSOPHERS
BICYCLISTS
SKY
SCUBA
GOLFERS
HUNTERS
CLASSICAL
PUNK
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FRUGAL LAVISH
STAIR TAKERS
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DRIVERS
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FOODIES
CHEFS
FATHERS
MOUNTAIN CLIMBERS
SPELUNKERS
ROCK AND ROLL
NONSMOKERS
THOSE WHO
OPTIMISTS
SMOKERS
ROCK
PESSIMISTS
ADULTS
THOSE ABOUT TO
ROCK
BOXERS BRIEFS
BRAVE TIMID
LABOR MANAGEMENT
BABIES
FENCE BUILDERS
JEWS MUSLIMS
POWER BOATERS
SAIL BOATERS
WOMEN
MEN
CHRISTIANS
MEAN
GIRLS
NICE
GIRLS
TYPE A PERSONALITY
TYPE B PERSONALITY
PROSECUTORS
DEFENDERS
GRANDPARENTS
MORNING
PEOPLE
TOURISTS
NATIVES
AWAKE
TIRED
NIGHT
PREPPIES
SINISTERS
BLOGGERS
MEDIA
MOGULS
FOOTBALL
FUTBOL
FANS
TANGO
SALSA
HERMITS
EXPLORERS
KIDS
STUDENTS
TEACHERS
FOLLOWERS
LEADERS
NIGHT
OWLS
EARLY RISERS
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GOTHS
SOCIALISTS
SOCIALITES
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GO-GETTERS

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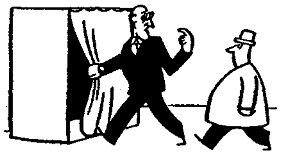
THE
NEW YORKER

THE TALK OF THE TOWN

COMMENT
MEMORY LAPSE

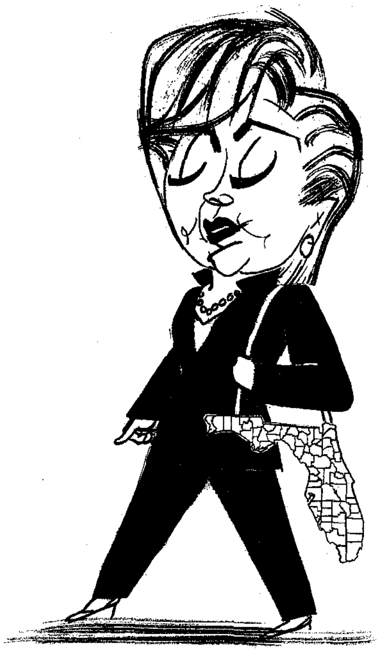


The precise origins of Memorial Day are a little fuzzy. According to one version, it was first celebrated in 1865, a few weeks after Lee surrendered to Grant; freed slaves and black and white Union soldiers marched to the site of a Confederate prisoner-of-war camp in Charleston, South Carolina, for some hearty hymn-singing and picnicking. Others place its beginnings in Waterloo, New York, a year later, while still others date it to 1868 and a proclamation by the commander of the Grand Army of the Republic, the Northern veterans' organization. What no one disputes is that the holiday's founding purpose was to honor the Civil War's fallen.

This year, thanks to HBO, the remembrances of the Memorial Day weekend encompassed another American civil war, happily less lethal to its combatants but far from trivial in its consequences: the election of 2000. HBO's movie "Recount" has fewer shrinks than "The Sopranos" and fewer laughs than "Curb Your Enthusiasm," but its over-all factual accuracy has been attested to by close observers of the events it portrays. It reminds us of some essential truths about the election and its aborted recount: that more Floridians went to their polling places to vote for Al Gore than for George W. Bush; that a full and fair count would have confirmed the voters' preference; that the White House was awarded to Bush, the half-million-vote loser across the nation, by a 5-4 Supreme Court diktat. The injustice of Bush v. Gore was obvious at the time; its sequel has proved it to be a tragedy.

The stock defense of Justice Antonin Scalia is a three-word sneer: "Get over it." Many people find themselves unable to take this bracing advice. The wound to the country's civic health remains fresh, though of course it is active, committed Democrats who feel it most keenly.

In the current Presidential primary campaign, as in the Electoral College, the "popular vote" has no official significance. According to the Party's rules, the nomination will go to whoever can garner a majority of the delegates at the Convention in Denver, regardless of how many voters or caucus-goers sent them there, or didn't. (The so-called superdelegates, who make up a fifth of the Convention, represent voters only in the highly attenuated sense of having earlier won public or party office.) Yet the popular vote, however juridically meaningless, carries immense moral and political weight with Democrats, for whom the 2000 travesty is a station of the cross and vote-counting a kind of sacrament. The superdelegates understand this. That's why it has been clear all along that if one of the candidates is able to claim an indisputable majority of actual flesh-and-blood Democrats it will be difficult to deny him—or her—the nomination. But what if the majority is highly disputable, and everybody has one?



"We're winning the popular vote," Hillary Clinton said last week, after prevailing in the Kentucky primary by a margin bigger than that by which she lost in Oregon. "More people have voted for me than for anyone who has ever run for the Democratic nomination." These statements must be read with the sort of close grammatical and definitional care that used to inform her husband's descriptions of his personal entanglements. They are not quite true in the normal sense, but if made under oath they would not be prosecutable for perjury, either.

In a nominating process, especially

ILLUSTRATIONS BY TOM BACHTELL

this one, the "popular vote" is an elusive phenomenon. RealClearPolitics.com, an independent Web site whose numbers political reporters and operatives tend to trust, maintains six separate tallies. At the moment, Obama leads in four of them. With or without participants in the caucus states of Iowa, Nevada, Maine, and Washington (i.e., states where voters' preferences were expressed by gathering in corners and the like, and whose numbers can be estimated but are not pinpointed), and with the totals for *both* Florida (whose primary was unsanctioned by the Democratic Party, with the consent of all the candidates, and where no one campaigned) and Michigan (also unsanctioned, and where Obama's name was not even on the ballot), Clinton's claim that more people have "voted" for her is factual. But her claim to be "ahead" depends entirely on a tally for the Michigan primary that is distinctly North Korean: Clinton, 328,309; Obama, 0. However, if the bulk of the 238,168 Michiganders who voted "uncommitted" are assumed to have been Obama supporters—a reasonable assumption—then Obama leads by every possible reckoning. And if only Florida is included, then Obama leads whether or not those four caucuses are counted.

Next week, after the three remaining primaries—Clinton is expected to sweep the largest of them, Puerto Rico's—the likelihood is that each candidate will be able to point to "metrics" showing that he or she is the people's choice. Obama will almost certainly have the better case, especially in view of opinion polls showing that his national lead among Democrats has been growing, but the reality is that the two have been almost equally strong. Obama will remain the leader in the delegate count, owing largely to a more astute strategy, and he will be the nominee. If there is a loftier lesson, it is that the nominating "system"—and not just in the Democratic Party—is an irrational mess. But that's not how Hillary Clinton sees it.

Last Wednesday, Clinton described the Democrats' long-standing reluctance to seat the Florida and Michigan delegations in their entirety, a reluctance that she shared back when she saw her nomination as inevitable, in these words: "We're seeing that right now in Zimbabwe." In a speech in Florida, she invoked the Declaration of Independence, "the consent of the governed," the abolition of slavery, "our most fundamental values," the 1848 Seneca Falls women's-suffrage convention, the sacrifice of soldiers, the tear gas at Selma, "equal justice under the law," and the Voting Rights Act. Worse, she invaded the Democratic sacristy, picked up the chalice, and flourished it like a club, saying that

> right here in Florida, you learned the hard way what happens when your votes aren't counted and the candidate with fewer votes is declared the winner. The lesson of 2000 here in Florida is crystal clear. If any votes aren't counted, the will of the people is not realized and our democracy is diminished.

Well, that depends on what the meaning of "count" is, doesn't it? Florida's (and Michigan's) votes in January's rogue primaries were indeed counted, and everyone understood well in advance that the question of how they would be translated into delegates was, at best, problematic.

In an eerie echo of the "Brooks Brothers riot" depicted in the HBO movie, when shouting Bush operatives and Republican congressional staffers who had been dispatched to Florida managed to shut down the Miami-Dade County recount, CNN reported on Thursday that Clinton supporters "are planning to swarm the capital in a little over a week to pressure Democratic Party leaders as they gather to decide the fate of the Florida and Michigan delegations." In 2000, the candidate most willing to deploy principles and trash them, according to the tactical needs of the moment, was awarded the prize. In 2008, maybe not.

—Hendrik Hertzberg

TEAM OBAMA HUDDLE

Last week, members of the steering committee for Generation Obama—a grassroots group that organizes young professionals—held an after-work meeting in a conference room at a marketing firm on Third Avenue. The theme was reaching out. "The name of the next fund-raiser is Let's Keep GOing," said Jeremy Goldberg, the group's leader, who is thirty-one and has dark curly hair and a baby face, and is working on a master's in international finance at Columbia. "That's capital 'G,' capital 'O.' Some people find it cheesy. I find it appealing."

There was no conference table, and the meeting was conducted in a support-group-style circle of office chairs. "It's significant that we're meeting now, right in Hillary Clinton's back yard," Goldberg said. "Many of us have friends on the other side, and we need to think about how to make room for them going forward." The group brainstormed about potential summer events: an Obama gallery tour, a beach party ("We did nothing in the Hamptons last year. I'm just throwing that out there"). Bridget Guarasci, a Ph.D. candidate writing her dissertation on Iraqi politics, ran through plans for the upcoming fund-raiser: rooftop fire pit, Facebook blasts, "Obama-tinis." Anuj Mathur, who works at a hedge fund, suggested a way to attract more finance guys: "I think it's good to say 'fire pit' in the e-mail," he said.

Todd Sutler, a third-grade teacher at the Bank Street School, raised his hand. "Can we talk a little bit about how to lay it on the Clinton people?"

"We don't want to be dancing in the end zone," Goldberg said. "Our plan is to sit down and have a drink with them, and, if they tell us they want to take leadership roles in the campaign, that's great."

Sutler said, "But they still might be thinking they have a chance."

Afterward, on the way to a sushi place for cold sake, the conversation turned to foreign policy, an area that Goldberg is especially interested in. He did a stint with Seeds of Peace, the Middle East peace nonprofit, and he has been working to help the Obama campaign sway Jewish voters on what he calls "the fifth Passover question: Is Obama good for Israel?" The answer, Goldberg insisted, was yes, and he suggested—despite recent skirmishes with John McCain and the Bush Administration—that Obama had made a lot of progress in the past few weeks.

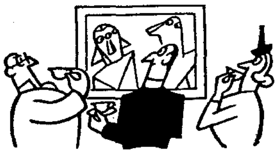
There was disagreement about whether Obama's communication style tends to be too nuanced. "Here's what I'm worried about," Sutler said. "Clinton knows how to say something that someone hears on the nightly news in Kansas and understands. I don't think Obama has mastered that." Philip Walotsky, who said that he works at a company that produces "healthy foods with a dash of Israeli-Palestinian relations," said that he appreciated Obama's nuance on questions about the Middle East.

"It's called *Jew*ance," Goldberg said. "That's a joke we made up in one of our Jewish-community meetings. But, if you like Obama, it's because he's someone who really knows what he's talking about."

Goldberg recommended that young Jewish Obama supporters use the same approach when talking to their older relatives. He admitted, "I'm still working on my own grandmother. This is someone who's been politically active. She still reads the Cleveland *Jewish News*, even though she's living in Houston. She voted for Jimmy Carter, and she regrets it, so she uses a Jimmy Carter sponge to wring out when she gets really mad." He said that she had been a Hillary supporter but was beginning to waver. "Our grandmothers trust us," he said. "She's starting to say, 'Well, if *you* like him that much. . . .' "

—*Lizzie Widdicombe*

NIGHT OUT DEPT.
SATIRE, IRANIAN

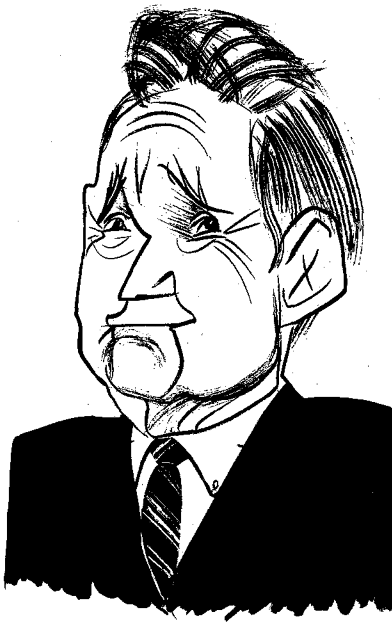


"I would say I've been an art lover all my life," Ramsey Clark, the former Attorney General, and international ambulance chaser, now eighty, said last week, before leaving his apartment in the Village to head uptown for the opening of a retrospective of the Iranian satirist Ardeshir Mohassess, at the Asia Society. "I've always had enormous respect for Goya's concern about violence in Spain, and the French artists, particularly those who were doing ink-and-paper drawings of the Revolution. And Ardeshir really rises above them. He expresses the long history and culture of his own people better than anybody I know."

Mohassess, a kind of Persian Saul Steinberg, left Tehran in 1976, after learning that the Shah was increasingly unhappy with his cartoons and illustrations, some of which had begun appearing on the *Times'* Op-Ed page. Clark helped him secure a visa to stay in the United States. "And it turned out we lived a hundred yards from each other," Clark said. "Still do. I'm on Twelfth and he's on Thirteenth." The two are kindred spirits, of a sort: Mohassess, an artist who has studied law, and Clark, a lawyer who collects art. ("We've got a wonderful Diego Rivera, a couple of Orozcos, a Dali—a unique Dali.") Later, Mohassess had "a landlord issue," as Clark put it, and Clark recruited one of his colleagues to help solve it. Mohassess repaid Clark with drawings—one of which Clark lent to the retrospective. It is inscribed "To Ramsey Clark" in the lower right-hand corner, and dated 1979, and depicts two dozen prisoners from the Qajar dynasty chained together, beside an armed guard, who holds a birdcage. The caption says, "My father, with his bird cage, was there too."

Mohassess was given a diagnosis of Parkinson's disease in the nineteen-eighties, and as his condition worsened, in recent years, Clark's neighborly visits slowed and then stopped. Clark, in the meantime, had volunteered to defend the longtime Iranian nemesis Saddam Hussein at his trial in Iraq. He now found himself wondering what the fearless Mohassess would have made of the controversy over the Danish cartoons, in 2005, which sparked violent protests throughout the Middle East. (Clark's own view, despite his years on the board of the A.C.L.U., was that the cartoons "weren't necessary, and it shouldn't have happened, and certainly the people of Denmark don't need to be informed about things like that.") "As well as I think I understand him, I can see him going either way on it," Clark said. "This cartoon he gave me one holiday season was a symbol of the power of the pen and the importance of the power of expression." He described a colorful line drawing of "a guy who looks like he's conquering the world—he's got a shield on one arm and a pen in the other, and he's waving it."

Clark and his wife, Georgia, arrived at the exhibit unnoticed by the largely Iranian-American guests, and began inspecting their contribution, which was newly framed. "It has so many meanings," Clark said, marvelling at the individuality of each of the prisoners' faces. "To me, the predominant meaning is: 'Forgive us, for we know not what we do.' 'Cause the guy obviously loves his bird—you know, got his bird in a cage, standing there with the rifle." Melissa Chiu, the museum's director, soon appeared behind Clark and asked him where he had hung the work. "This was at the office," he said. "Then we brought it home, but we didn't have any wall space. Sixty years of marriage, you got lots of framed pictures." It ended up leaning against a bookcase on the floor of the bedroom—Georgia's domain.

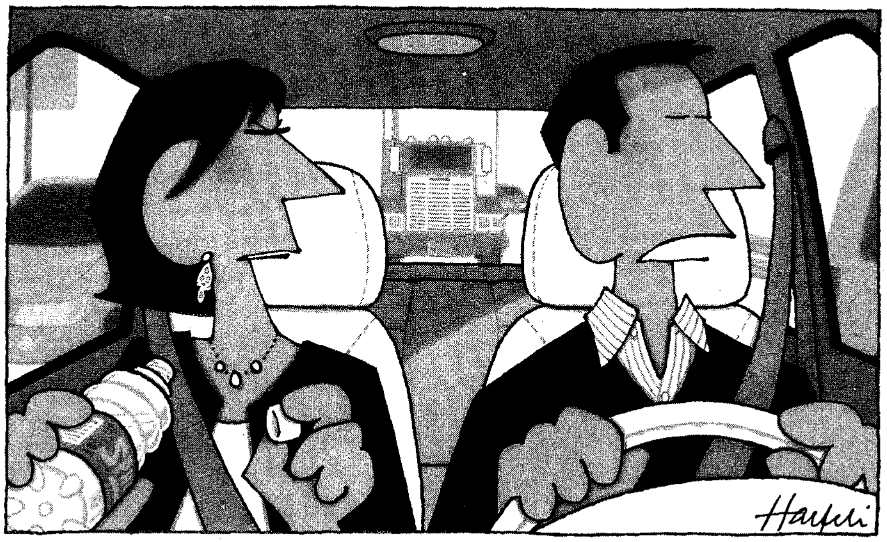


Ramsey Clark

"She has, over what's now her makeup stuff, a beautiful French oil, and then she's got a mother and child by Rivera," he went on. "But they're peaceful things in the bedroom."

Clark surveyed the crowded gallery. "They got a good turnout," he said. "You have to wonder how many people had heard of Ardeshir before they came. He's a very private person. I've always respected Emily Dickinson's line 'The soul selects her own society, / Then shuts the door; / On her divine majority / Obtrude no more.' You know, he's consumed with his thoughts. He has a pad and a pen with him all the time. He doesn't get out—he's not physically able to get out."

Georgia was hovering nearby, seem-



"Your mere presence turns any state into a battleground state."

• •

ing a little impatient. Clark checked his watch. They had tickets to see "Thurgood," on Broadway, starring Laurence Fishburne as the Justice who replaced Clark's father on the Supreme Court, in 1967. "I hadn't planned to go, but the producers wanted us—they gave us the tickets," Clark said. "You know, we love Thurgood. Very close to his family. I hope we'll get a kick out of it."

—*Ben McGrath*

CALIFORNIA POSTCARD
ON A LIMB

Calum Wright did not go to Berkeley—that's Berserkley, to those who remember the sixties—to be an activist. He is a law-and-order type, reared among conservatives in London, and a member of the crew team, whose tastes run to khakis and polo shirts. He likes the campus police. But, not long ago, Wright, using the latest in protest technology—Facebook—was moved to organize a rally at the base of a campus oak, near Sproul Plaza, the storied place of free-speech happenings and Joan Baez concerts. His cause: Students Against Hippies in Trees. The action: to shout down a former Berkeley student named Michael (Fresh) Schuck, who had taken up residence in the oak seventeen days earlier. The invitation, sent to some six hundred members of the SAHIT Facebook group, from "hippy hater no. 1," read:

> There will be a jolly gathering on this coming friday, providing that fresh is still up there, to stir as much shit as legally possible with the hippies on the ground and our jolly mate "fresh."...
>
> We will be the noisy fucks camping out next to those smelly ugly freeloading hippies.

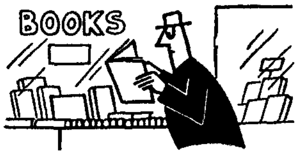
Fresh, who is twenty-six, said he took "a purple khadi, homespun from India," wrapped it around his head like Lawrence of Arabia, and went up the tree with the idea of drawing attention to a host of issues: the housing of Native American remains in a campus museum; the undemocratic method by which the regents of the University of California are selected; the university system's ties to British Petroleum, Dow Chemical, and two nuclear laboratories; and, not least, the cause of some fellow non-students tree-sitting in a grove half a mile away, near the football stadium, where the university hopes to build a new athletic center. (The city of Berkeley, in conjunction with two local groups—the California Oak Foundation and the Panoramic Hill Association—has sued to prevent the construction; the judge is expected to issue a ruling by mid-June.) The SAHIT's position is easier to crystallize. As Wright put it, "Look, come down, you're a joke." Plus, he and his friends resent the enormous cost of containing the tree-sitters: more than three hundred thousand dollars in twenty-four-hour security guards and fencing.

On the day of the rally, Matthew Taylor, a fifth-year student in the Peace and Conflict Studies Program, who is an avid supporter of the tree-sitters and is writing his thesis about the protest in the grove, arrived to see a crowd of SAHIT supporters gathering around Fresh's tree. Some of his cohorts had gathered, too, for a counter-counter-demonstration. "I decided that I should try to formulate an intervention," Taylor said. He prevailed upon about a hundred and fifty students, from both sides of the issue, to sit on the ground in a "dialogue circle." Wright remained on his feet. When it was his turn to talk, he said, he told the counter-protesters, "What the tree-sitters were doing was completely the wrong way to do it. It was harassing, it was agitating. To be on a university campus when you're not a member of the university speaking for the university—the whole idea seemed completely aggravating." When Fresh saw the two groups come together for a talk, he inched down the tree to listen, eventually descending to the ground to surrender himself to the police. "I went up there to raise awareness," he said. "The job had been done. It was time." He was cited for trespassing, and booked at the campus station. He and Wright resolved their disagreement with an old-fashioned hug, and then became Facebook friends.

In the wake of Fresh's arrest, Victoria Harrison, who has been the university's police chief for eighteen years, sent an e-mail to the entire academic community. "Everyone who wears the UCPD uniform understands that policing here requires understanding, sensitivity, and tolerance if this campus is to remain a hospitable host for the free exchange of ideas and opinions," she wrote. In response, she received several hundred e-mails, ranging from bafflement ("Personally I have never understood the idea of protesting via tree, but I know many of my classmates find it admirable") to empathy ("I appreciate your dedication to our safety, and hope that you do not feel too antagonized on a campus whose heritage is somewhat based on questioning authority figures") and possibly even complete misunderstanding ("I agree with you 100%. I hate those tree people or those crazy people who walk around in Sproul and lecture everyone on the harm of cell phones"), with many smiley-face emoticons. A practical-minded sports fan, who graduated with the class of 2008, began by thanking Harrison profusely, then wrote, "You can be sure that the student body will once again rise to the call of our beloved University. Not everyone is here to practice free speech and be a nuisance; most of us are here to obtain one of the finest educations in the world. Go Bears!"

—*Dana Goodyear*

SPEAKEASIES
WANNA BUY A BOOK?



Michael Seidenberg has a beard with deckled edges, a boyish face with only minor wear, a spine in fine shape, a mint mind, and a Brooklyn provenance, circa early nineteen-fifties. He also has a used-book shop, but mum's the word. Brazen Head Books, originally situated in Brooklyn and, later, on East Eighty-fourth Street in Manhattan, has just reëmerged (after a decade-long retirement) as a by-appointment-only concern, housed in an apartment whose address Seidenberg would just as soon keep secret.

One recent Sunday, several writers, a couple of filmmakers, a photographer, an art restorer, a scientist, and certain other personages gathered at this hideaway to celebrate—in a nonchalant sort of way—Brazen Head's latest incarnation. They had been invited by the novelist Jonathan Lethem, who met Seidenberg about thirty years ago, when Lethem, then fourteen, worked at the Brooklyn shop, doing grunt work in exchange for books.

The guests, as per invitation, arrived at staggered intervals, for the not-Barnes-&-Noble-scale operation space—three cozy rooms and a closet-size nook—was hardly meant for crowds. Still, there was a remarkable abundance of books.

"Is this, like, the greatest garage sale of all time?" Vince Passaro, a novelist and essayist, said. Passaro was browsing in the middle room, where there is a section dedicated to the works of John Cowper Powys, one of Seidenberg's favorites and the author of the 1956 novel "The Brazen Head." A brazen head, should you have forgotten your medieval history, is a brass head that was supposedly able to answer any question. The statue's powers, Seidenberg explained, sitting at a big old desk, were dormant until an alchemical rite was performed, the last step of which required the involvement of a Hebrew virgin. "The reason we have so few brazen heads in contemporary times," he theorized, "is that it's hard to find a Hebrew virgin nowadays."

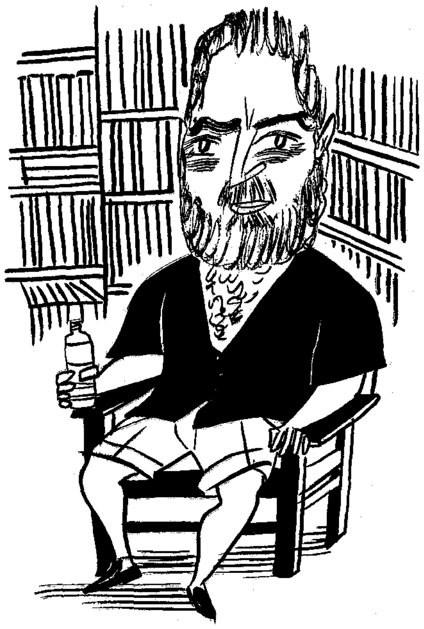
In the back room, the writers Peter Straub, Sean Wilsey, and Nathan Englander were playing Name That Year—holding up collectible books and trying to guess the year of publication. They were also discussing why two similar-looking first editions of Marilynne Robinson's "Housekeeping" were priced so differently. "Foxing," Wilsey said, adding that that was the only biblio term he knew and he wanted to use it.

The buzzer seemed to be always buzzing, and Seidenberg to be always leading a guided tour and chronicling the history of Brazen Head to yet another newcomer. Briefly:

In the nineteen-seventies, Seidenberg ran a bookshop, a puppet troupe and theatre, and a moving company—all out of the same storefront. One day, he noticed a commercial rental on the Upper East Side and, on a whim, grabbed it, and decided to concentrate his business efforts on books. But the shop struggled.

"One reason was that the entrance was a few steps below the sidewalk, and lots of people seem to have an aversion to walking down," he said. Seven years later, the rent quadrupled, and Seidenberg lost his lease. The contents of the store were relocated to his apartment, on the same block. "It was an amount of books you wouldn't necessarily want to live with," he said. So he and his wife left, and the literature stayed. Occasionally, Seidenberg would set up a booth at a book fair. He also peddled paperbacks on the street for a while, an experience that he found disheartening. Long stretches of staring at his books and wondering what to do with them followed. And then, last year, his friend George Bisacca, a conservator of paintings at the Metropolitan Museum, stepped in. Bisacca transformed the higgledy-piggledy storage space into the bookshop-in-an-apartment that it is today.

To say that Seidenberg's shop is back in business is not quite accurate, for business was never his model. He envisions a hangout, where readers can relax in comfortable chairs with a favorite book. "I had this idea of telling customers they couldn't buy anything the first time they came," he said, "so that they'd believe me when I say nobody is obliged to buy anything." His wife nixed that idea.



Michael Seidenberg

That first Sunday evening, Seidenberg estimated that he grossed about nine hundred dollars, on purchases that ranged from two dollars to two hundred. He was very pleased, and it moved him to relate a story from the dark period, not too long ago, when he was selling books on the street. "Once, a couple stopped," he recalled. "And the man asked his girlfriend, 'Do you want a book?' She said, 'No, I already have a book.' "

—*Patricia Marx*

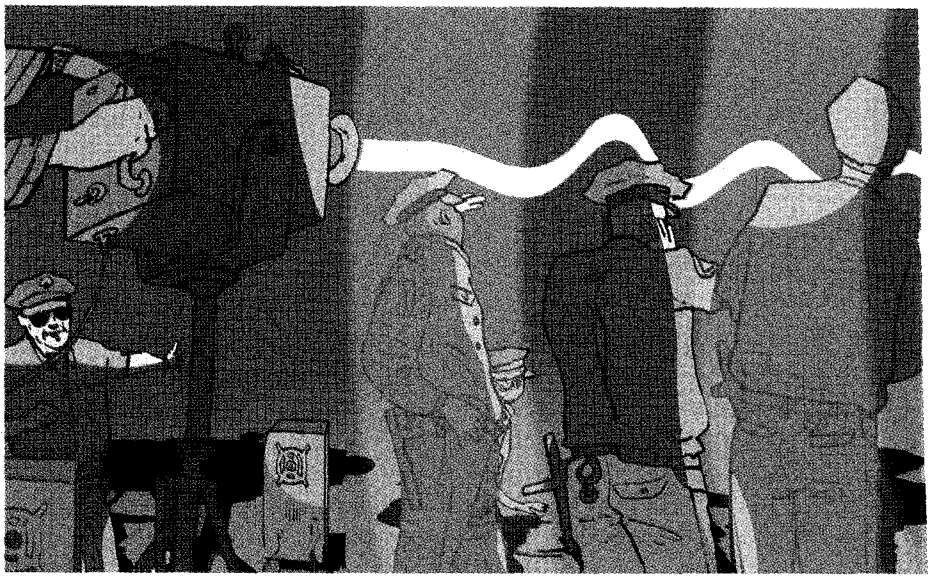
ANNALS OF TECHNOLOGY

NON-LETHAL FORCE

Looking for ways to stop violent criminals, without killing them.

BY ALEC WILKINSON

A judgment sometimes applied by professionals to a non-lethal weapon is that if the weapon is any good—if it reliably protects someone from being attacked or subdues a person without causing harm—criminals will use it. Absent a small number of robberies committed with pepper spray, though, they haven't really taken to any. According to Charles Heal, an expert in non-lethal weapons, the problem is that the field is nascent, and "the options are primitive. The whole state of the art is only a shade over a decade old."



Manufacturers typically produce non-lethal weapons for soldiers, because the military mar

ISTVAN BANYAI

"Non-lethal" is an imperfect term. "Lethal weapons are defined by their capability," Heal says. "Non-lethal are defined by their intent." In the hands of the police, non-lethal weapons are meant to resolve a crisis (say, a Hells Angel in a bar who has broken a chair over someone's head and is overturning tables, and who, when asked to leave, draws a knife) without anyone getting badly hurt or being killed. They are also sometimes called less than lethal, less lethal, controlled force, soft kill, mission kill, and minimal force. There is no established lexicon for non-lethal weapons, but there are accepted categories and concepts, including impact or kinetic weapons—things that strike, such as batons, billy clubs, saps, and projectiles fired from shotguns (including bean bags and stun bags, which usually have sand in them instead of lead pellets), and "vivi," meaning animals. "Dog is the only non-lethal weapon I can change my mind about after I deploy it," Heal says. "The suspect sees me and puts his hands up, I can call it back. If I launch a bean bag, it's downrange. Dog's also the only one with target-acquisition radar: suspect moves, dog does, too." In addition, there are irritants, such as tear gas, which was first used on a crowd in Paris, in 1912; malodorants (stink bombs); obscurants, which interfere with seeing, either by means of lasers or smoke or other substances; electrical, such as Tasers; physiological, which includes noises that are too loud and lights that are too bright, sometimes combined in devices called flashbangs; reactants, which include activities such as cloud seeding (conducted in Vietnam above the Ho Chi Minh Trail); and soporifics, which are

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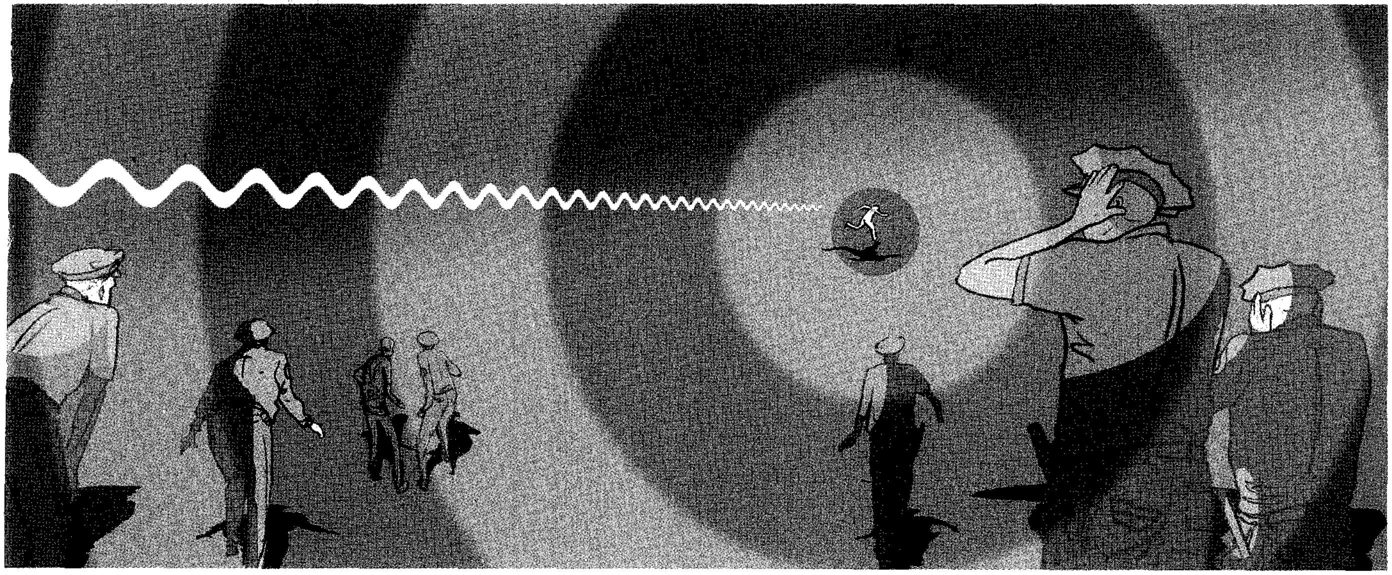
also called calmatives, sedatives, and hypnotics. "What they used in the Moscow Theatre," Heal says, referring to the occasion, in 2002, when Chechen terrorists took over a theatre, with nearly eight hundred people in it, and were subdued with a chemical delivered through the ventilation system. More than a hundred of the hostages died, some of them as a result of the chemical. Still, Heal says, they are the only weapons that "allow you to intervene in a lethal situation without having to resort immediately to lethal force."

Heal was among the first Americans to use modern non-lethal weapons, as a marine in Somalia in 1995. One was a foam called sticky foam, which was shot from a hose and designed to fix a person's feet to the ground. The problem was that people could move their feet faster than the sticky foam could be applied, although, Heal says, if you hit a person's thighs his legs sometimes stuck together. Heal's orders were to provide a twenty-minute window between the withdrawal of American soldiers and the arrival of "the people with crude weapons and guns on the backs of old trucks who'd rush in to take over." He had his troops scatter caltrops, ancient devices made of spiked rods welded together in such a way that, however they land, a spike faces upward, like a child's jack. The Somalis cast the caltrops aside. Heal had his soldiers lay down more caltrops and cover them with sticky foam; the Somalis picked these up, too, and threw them away, although it took longer. Heal's soldiers then put down sheets of plywood, laid concertina wire over the plywood, laid caltrops on the plywood, and covered everything with sticky foam, which held up the Somalis for about five minutes, sufficient for the troops to retreat. Heal and others think that sticky foam might work in an embassy or at a missile base or a nuclear plant, where the floors could be flooded if someone broke in.


larger and the military has more money. To sell weapons to the police, the manufacturers tend to modify, rather than redesign, them.

For more than thirty years, Heal, who is fifty-eight, and is known as Sid, divided his career between the Marine reserves and the Los Angeles Sheriff's Department. (The Sheriff's Department acts as the police in parts of Los Angeles County that are not incorporated, and in cities such as Compton, where its services are retained by contract.) He is probably the most knowledgeable figure in America on the civil uses of non-lethal weapons. According to Nicholas C. Nicholas, the lead scientist at the Institute for Non-Lethal Defense Technologies, at Penn State, "There's nobody close to him. I saw him interviewed on TV the other night, and I said to my wife, 'That's Mr. Non-Lethal Weapons as far as the police are concerned.' " Heal has served on the front in four wars—Vietnam, Somalia, Kuwait, and Iraq. When he returned from Somalia, he says, he "ended up on the lecture tour for the Marines in lessons learned." The Los Angeles undersheriff called him into his office and said that if he could specialize in non-lethal weapons for the Marines he could do it for the Sheriff's Department. Heal became the only municipal-law-enforcement figure in America then devoted to non-lethal weapons.

Manufacturers typically produce non-lethal weapons for soldiers, because the military market is larger and the military has more money. To sell weapons to the police, the manufacturers tend to modify, rather than redesign, the military versions. In addition, manufacturers often take advice from retired military officers, who, Heal says, have "no insight into law enforcement." Heal began urging inventors and manufacturers to design non-lethal weapons for policemen rather than soldiers, and whenever they made something he tested it. He assumed that manufacturers would be responsive, because the L.A.S.D. is so big—"Sixteen thousand employees, five thousand vehicles, and I don't know how many boats and planes"—that he thought it could be a market in itself. As an incentive, Heal was willing to provide for free the expertise for which manufacturers paid consultants hundreds of dollars an hour.

Heal had a talent for describing to a manufacturer precisely what a policeman needed and whether or not its product worked well. Over the years, about twenty-five ideas that inventors and manufacturers have approached him with have become products, including a portable robot called a Throwbot, which has wheels and a camera and can go into rooms where someone might be hiding with a gun; the SkySeer, an unmanned aerial vehicle with a camera; the Pepper-

Ball, a projectile like a paintball that disperses an irritating powder; and a few repulsive malodorants. Among those that haven't worked out are the Bola Ball, which a policeman would carry on his belt and fling at running suspects (it was too difficult to master), and a device shaped like a pistol which used ultrasound to detect concealed weapons (it worked well on cotton and wool but less reliably on leather or synthetic fabrics). Recently, Heal has attended tests of the Active Denial System, or A.D.S., made for the military by Raytheon, which sends a beam of energy that heats a person's skin to a hundred and thirty degrees within a matter of seconds. It is sometimes called the pain ray. Heal says that being beamed with it is like stepping into a scalding shower. "It's the first non-lethal device in history to provide protection against lethal force, because its range exceeds rifle fire," he says. The military hopes to use the A.D.S. in Iraq to disperse crowds or stop people at checkpoints who keep coming after being told to stop. It currently has little use in law enforcement, though. "If they gave it to us for free, we probably couldn't use it," Heal told me. The first police chief to use the pain ray on Americans would become famous overnight.

It isn't so much that the police are uncomfortable about using violence when they feel that their safety is jeopardized; it is that often when they kill people they end up in lawsuits. When a non-lethal weapon is being tested, Heal says, the critical standard is whether it creates a "save"—that is, whether a person who would have been killed was instead apprehended, because the manufacturer can then cite the dollars saved from a lawsuit. The standing of any non-lethal weapon that creates a save advances from speculative to favorable. According to Nicholas, the non-lethal weapon that everyone desires is "the phaser where you can put it on stun."

Non-lethal weapons can force a suspect to declare his intentions, and that sometimes leads to a save. Heal once took part in a gun battle with a man who was shooting at him and his fellow-deputies from behind a barricade. "He had a Winchester .458 calibre," Heal says. "An elephant gun—the bullets are as big as your thumb. He's shooting through cinder-block walls, and we're using the holes to look back at him. Finally, he comes out with his hands in his pockets. We're all yelling, 'Get your hands out of your pockets.' All around me, I can hear the slack coming out of the triggers—they're about to shoot. It's pretty clear he's trying to commit suicide by cop, but what if there's a weapon in his pockets? What gets us killed isn't the ability to apply lethal force; it's the reluctance to use it, and the reason we're reluctant is that we can't make informed decisions. The rules of engagement that allow us to use lethal force mean that we have to tolerate a lot more abuse and risk. With a non-lethal-weapon option, you don't have to accept the conditions offered. What happened was, someone threw a flashbang at this guy, and his hands came out of his pockets, and we jumped him and wrestled him down. The flashbang enabled us to determine his intentions. That's a save."

"I forget to drink."

Heal is about six feet tall. His carriage is erect. He has a large nose and sharp, elemental features—he looks a little as if a child had drawn him. He is exceptionally fit—he runs every morning before dawn, and sometimes he rides his bicycle a hundred miles in a day. His manner is emphatic, and his eyes sometimes widen when he speaks. He has blue eyes and brown hair cut short on the sides and a little longer on top. Several times a day, he plants his feet, takes a black comb from his back pocket, and draws it slowly across the front of his head, smoothing his hair with his following hand so that it stands up like a hedge. Commanders in the L.A.S.D. (there are twenty-eight of them) can wear their own clothes, but Heal would always wear a uniform. He was the only commander who did. "I have color-coördination issues," he says. Heal grew up on a farm in Michigan. The trip he made at the age of eighteen, to San Diego, to join the Marines, was the first time he had ever taken a bus or a taxi or a plane. While he was there, he saw his first movie. His hearing was damaged during training, when a soldier stepped on a trip wire that set off a booby trap about a foot from his head.

Heal has been injured more often at work than he was at war. Between 1979 and 1982, he was a deputy sheriff assigned to South Central L.A., where, he says, he couldn't drive down the street without seeing a crime. One year, he drew his gun so many times that the bluing on the barrel wore off. He has surgical pins in his hand from a fight with a glue sniffer. Another drug suspect broke his nose, leaving a scar between his eyes that looks like the flippers on a pinball game. ("It's not pretty," Heal says, "but it's better than what I had.") He was also hurt repeatedly in fights with suspects intoxicated with PCP, which is a dissociative anesthetic. "They'd take off their clothes, because their body temperature was so hot," Heal says. "They'd be slimy hot, and they'd jump into swimming pools and showers, and, for whatever reason, they'd climb onto roofs. If you got a call for a naked man on a roof, that was PCP."

PCP made even small men feel unnaturally strong, and a strong man was nearly impossible to subdue. "The only way to overwhelm them was with weight," Heal told me. "We tried nets, we tried poles, ladders, fire extinguishers." For a while, they tried throwing blankets over them and binding them with ropes. One man, a Samoan, required four officers to bend his arms into handcuffs. " 'Non-lethal' was hardly a term in those days," Heal says. "The non-lethal options were a baton, which all it did was get the guy mad, or tear gas, which they didn't feel and tended to work better on us."

Heal's field trials of new weapons last several weeks or months and involve sometimes just a few deputies and sometimes as many as five hundred. In 2000, he tested the TigerLight, a flashlight that also dispersed pepper spray. Deputies carried pepper spray and flashlights on their tool belts; the problem was that fights broke out too quickly for them to get to their pepper spray, whereas they usually had their flashlights in hand. "When a deputy gets in trouble, he's going to hit with his flashlight, and you're going to get stitches, which almost always result in lawsuits," Heal says.

Initially, Heal distributed twenty TigerLights. The deputies didn't like that when the lights were upside down the pepper spray leaked on them. The manufacturer fixed the problem, and in 2005 Heal gave out five hundred TigerLights. "We figured if the option to use the spray in the TigerLight could reduce head strikes by even two or three per cent we're going to recover the money the TigerLights cost," Heal says. The difference was closer to thirty per cent. "It was a real sleeper." He says that at the end of a trial the endorsement he looks for is that deputies complain when he takes the weapon away.

Manufacturers who have a product that they want Heal to consider tend to bring it to him, but he also travels a lot. He answers anyone who contacts him, and he has spent a good deal of time driving around Southern California visiting inventors. Recently, I went with him to see David McGill, a retired member of the L.A.P.D., who had written a letter describing a device he calls the Carpoon. McGill and his wife live in Temecula, about seventy miles southeast of L.A. The Carpoon is designed to stop cars that are fleeing the police.

"People have thought of all kinds of harpoon devices," Heal told me on the way to McGill's. "Some shoot out the tires, some lock onto the car, then you drag them to a stop by slamming on the brakes. What we're going to see here is called a running gear-entanglement system. His idea is he fires a probe that hits a tire then rolls a cable around the axle and kills the ability to drive the wheel. It's the release part that's a good idea—being entangled is not attractive. Nobody likes entanglement. You're entangled, he spins out, which makes us spin out; it's like a boa. There's so much civil liability with that. Even if a bad guy's breaking the law, he was safely breaking the law until we spun him out."

Recalling other inventions, Heal mentioned a man who had built a remote-control machine gun. "You looked at a little TV screen that has a crosshair on it, and you fired with a toggle switch," he said. "I put eight rounds through a target, but it had no application in law enforcement that I could think of. Another lab had a sniper-detection system that would locate a sniper by a combination of acoustics and light. They were taking it to the Balkans—this was '97 or '98. I tried to get them to let us borrow one for South Central L.A., but it was classified."

Heal took an exit off the freeway. "One device I really liked was a camera that fit on a dog's head," he continued. "It was just like a little hat, and when the dog searches for a crook you see what the dog sees. There was also a little speaker that fit in the dog's ear. You could talk quietly and the dog would follow your commands. That one, I think, still has potential. The dog handlers were willing to try it; I just wasn't able to get the canine to buy into it. The problem is, it takes about three weeks for the dogs to tolerate it, and until they do they'll scratch their heads and pull at their ears. The guy only wanted to give it to me for a month."

By now, we had arrived in a neighborhood of single-story houses. Heal had brought McGill's letter with him and, reading the address on the back of the envelope, he parked in front of a house

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where a tall, thin man in a red sweatshirt and jeans waved to us from the lawn—McGill himself. We went into the house and met his wife, Cheryl, then we sat in the living room.

"I might mention that my first pursuit was in 1957," McGill said. "Kid running for nothing, and he ended up hitting a train off Alameda. Knocked the train off the track and didn't do him any good, either." He went on for a while, then said, "Let's change gears and talk about Carpoon."

"How do you envision this?" Heal asked. "It shoots a probe?"

"Powerful mini-barrel air gun mounted on the front bumper of a police car," McGill said. He leaned toward Heal. "The air gun is slaved to a dash-mounted computerized video camera that will project the image of the road in front of the police car. As soon as the officer goes into pursuit mode, the other car's rear tires appear on his computer screen. The officer touches a tire on the screen, crosshairs immediately appear. Another touch on the screen moves the crosshair to any quadrant of the tire he wants, and when he's satisfied he gets an aural tone, like a sidewinder missile. As long as he hears that tone, that crosshair is on the tire, no matter where the guy goes."

McGill waved a hand. "From here on out, everything is automatic," he said. "All the time the officer's driving, he hears the tone. At a predetermined distance, the gun is going to fire. He's just driving."

Heal's BlackBerry began buzzing, and he took it out and read a message. Then he said, "Sorry."

"Air gun shoots a tethered dart into the tire," McGill went on. "Now the bad guy's got a quarter-inch hole in his tire. In addition, the computer will give him some cable that will wrap around his wheel and cause real havoc. I'm hoping we can engineer something that will break an axle, break a tire shaft."

McGill turned to me. "These guys, Sid and I know, will lose a tire and keep going, but we've taken the hundred-mile-an-hour thing out of it."

"You have no idea on price, though, because you don't have a developer, right?" Heal asked.

"I don't have anything," McGill said. "I need a money partner."

Heal leaned back slightly. "All this stuff is feasible," he said. "Military uses it all the time." He asked if McGill had consulted the National Institute of Justice Office of Science and Technology.

"I haven't looked at anything," McGill said. "I just got the patent."

"You're going to need a working prototype before you have much of a chance," Heal said. "They got to see it, touch it, smell it, watch it work."

He looked hard at McGill and said, "I have to tell you something: Do not mortgage your house. Do not give up your retirement."

McGill looked at his wife. "We're not going to do that," he said. His wife shook her head.

"Perfect is the enemy of good," Heal said. "If you can get to the field-trial stage, you're the only one there. When I first read your letter, it came across as a tether device, and they're almost universally rejected."

Heal said a few more things about how McGill might proceed, then he and McGill shook hands, and we went to Heal's car. As we drove away, McGill waved to us from the lawn.

I asked Heal what chance he thought the Carpoon had. "What we're hoping really is somebody invents a directed-energy device that uses a signal from our car to interrupt the other car's ability to supply fuel or ignition," he said. "It may make the fuel mixture too rich or too thin, and if you can change it even briefly the car will die. That's the Holy Grail. Whoever invents that will be rich from the day he does."

More than new inventions, Heal sees weapons made for the military and adapted for the police. Traditionally, many adaptations have involved shooting less harmful things at people than metal bullets. In 1958, British colonial police in Hong Kong used bullets made from teak called baton rounds. They would aim the guns at the ground, and the bullets would ricochet—it was called skip-firing—and hit people in the shins, which was very painful. A refinement, rubber bullets—which were lethal often enough to be controversial—was invented by the British in 1970, to be used against the Irish in Northern Ireland. The government wanted some means of striking protesters who were throwing rocks at them from afar.

The Taser, which the police tend to adore and civil-liberties organizations loathe, was patented, in 1974, by a NASA researcher named John Cover. The name Taser is derived from "Tom Swift and His Electric Rifle," a book in a series for adolescents first published in the early twentieth century. Tom Swift was an inventor, and the plots usually involved things he dreamed up to resolve a crisis. (Cover was fond of the books.) The Taser can reach a person thirty-five feet away. The pain it causes is temporarily debilitating. Nevertheless, people have died after being shot with it. Amnesty International believes that the Taser hasn't been tested properly and that it should be withdrawn until more is known about how it affects certain classes of people. Short of that, the organization would like to see it used solely when killing someone is the only alternative. Heal regards the Taser as a valuable tool that should never be used recklessly—merely to subdue a troublesome person, for example.

"In law enforcement, our core value is to have a reverence for human life," Heal told me. "It doesn't mean we can't or won't take it; it means we would avoid taking it if we could. Life-and-death decisions are made in the military and in law enforcement by the least experienced people, just the opposite of business. But they are the ones in harm's way. And therein lies a great irony: even the failure of a non-lethal weapon makes a case for restraint. Let's say a guy's coming with a machete. We hit him with bean bags. He doesn't stop. And we kill him. We went to great efforts. A primitive option is a warning shot."

For policemen, Heal said, "twenty-one feet and a hundred and eighty feet are the two figures your non-lethal weapon has to satisfy. Twenty-one feet is the distance at which you can be killed by a person with an edged weapon or club if the force you use to deter him is not immediately effective, which means right-now lethal. A hundred and eighty feet—less than three per cent of the population can throw an object large enough to cause serious injury beyond that. Golf balls, spark plugs—

they'll give you stitches. But a brick—you get hit in the head, helmet or not, it'll put you on your knees. If you have a weapon that has a range shorter than a hundred and eighty feet, while you're approaching them to get into your range you're being pummelled with bricks and bottles. In the middle of the city, where everything's paved, they bring stuff to throw at us—wheel weights, things that are cheap. We had one guy who could throw a golf ball ninety-seven yards. You can buy a bag of golf balls for five bucks and equip everybody in the mob."

One day, I went with Heal to a sheriff's station to meet a salesman from a company in Washington State who had a laser that he wanted Heal to see. The salesman's name was Clint Meyers. From a briefcase he produced a black metal tube that looked like a gunsight, and a larger one that was about the size of a Maglite. He handed the small one to Heal. "This is the military version they're using over in the sandbox right now," he said.

"What's eye safe on this?" Heal asked.

"Eye safe is about eighteen metres," Meyers said.

Heal twisted the device in his hands. "The official term the military gives it is 'to visually dissuade,'" Meyers said for my benefit. "Someone approaching a checkpoint sees this, he knows he's supposed to stop."

"What do you see as your law-enforcement market?" Heal asked.

"Entries," Meyers said. He turned to me. "The reason I wanted the Commander to see this is it's a way to come into a building—you know, the bright lights they have on shields; it does the same kind of job."

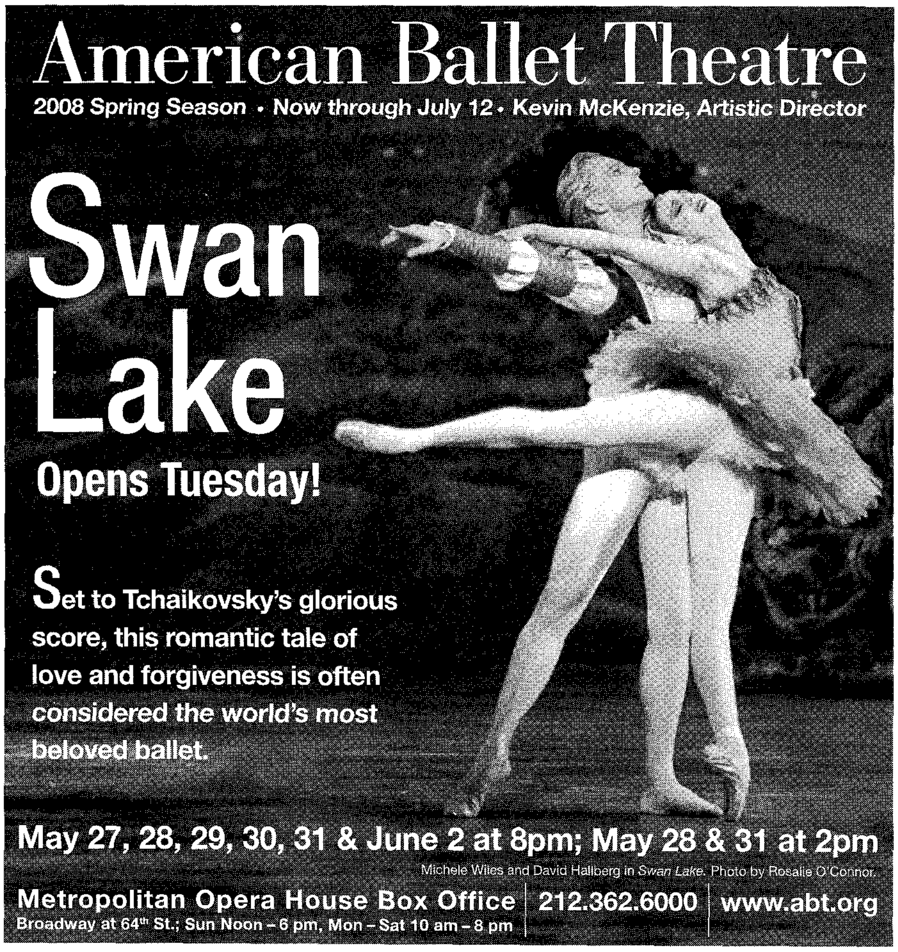
"I don't want anyone using shields on entries," Heal said. "You're in a defensive posture, you're sacrificing mobility." He turned the laser in his hands. "Some of it's going to carry through to law enforcement, and some's not," he added. "By shining that light, you're going to make an individual take one of two actions—turn away or fight through."

"The military doesn't care which," Meyers said.

Heal asked how much the device cost.

"I don't really have an answer," Meyers said. "Five thousand for the military one."

Heal told Meyers that he'd like to see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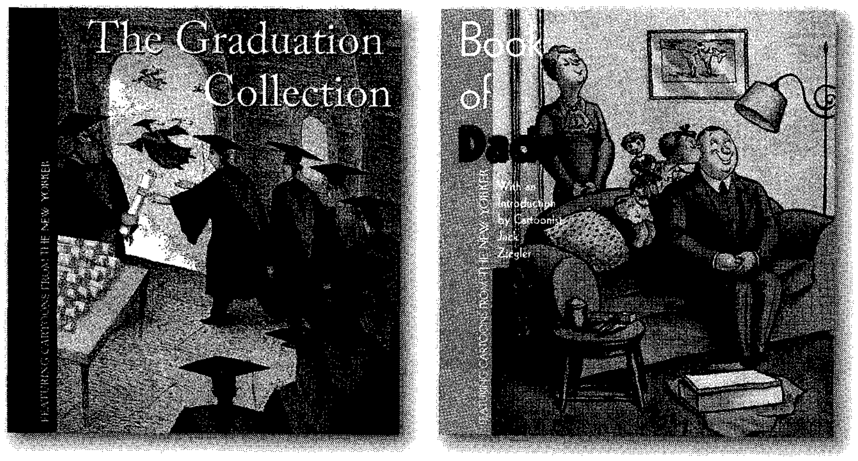
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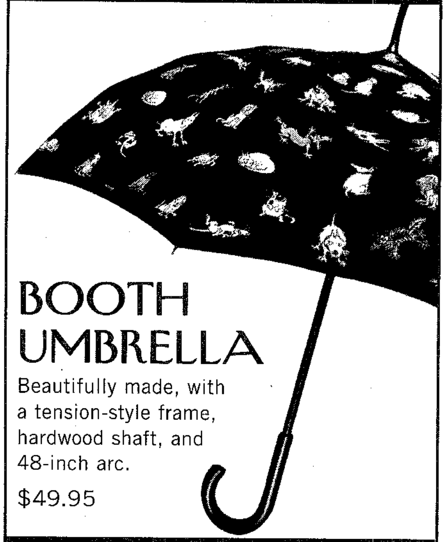

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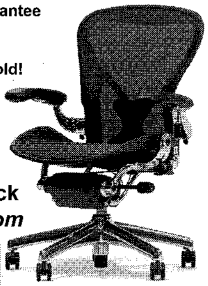

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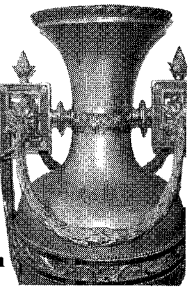

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the SWAT team test the laser; he thought three to six months would be a sensible period for a trial. "If they like it, they'll fight for it," Heal said.

Then Meyers measured off seventy feet, and we took turns shining the laser at each other. "I've been shot with these many times, so I don't mind," Heal said. When it was shined at me, I couldn't see for several minutes to take notes, and Heal said that this was called the afterburn.

In January, Heal gave notice that he would retire from the Sheriff's Department on March 31st. At that point, he had received at least sixteen job offers, including one to teach crowd- and riot-control tactics in China—three days in Canton and three days in Beijing. He has no idea how he came to the attention of the Chinese government. The offer he finds most interesting involves consulting with Raytheon on the Active Denial System—the pain ray. There were also offers to work with a lab that is building a light-emitting diode incapacitator, and another that is working on a means of stopping a car by interfering with its onboard computer.

Heal's first plan was to ride his bicycle across the Mojave and then through the Great Plains, and eventually to Michigan, stopping at every historical site and library he passed. (He left at the end of April.) "I want to continue with my 'calling' and build better non-lethal options and work with developers and law-enforcement agencies," he wrote to me in an e-mail. "But for right now I just want to put my life back in order." So far, he has agreed only to take part in a study in Washington that focusses on what parallels might exist between law enforcement's treatment of gangs and the military's handling of tribes and clans.

Early in April, at a retirement luncheon attended by more than two hundred people, including colleagues from the Sheriff's Department and the Marines, Heal was given the Distinguished Service Award, one of the department's highest honors. He also received proclamations from the California Senate and the Assembly, and the five badges he had worn throughout his career. Heal's place will be taken by the man he worked with the most, Sergeant Brian Muller, who kept a notebook in which he wrote down remarks Heal made.

I asked Heal if he had ever read a letter describing an invention and dropped it in the wastebasket. He shook his head. "I'll listen to everything." Then he said that one of the products he likes best was initially among the least plausible. It is a speaker that broadcasts sound by means of magnets, and he took me to Costa Mesa to see it. "This guy called me and made these fantastic, wild, incredible claims," he said as we drove. "I talked to him, but the things he was claiming were impossible. There is a law in physics called the inverse square law, which says that as the distance is doubled the sound is quartered, and yet this guy was saying that with his invention we can hear sound with clarity at ranges that we've never seen before, at factors more powerful."

The product, he said, was called MAD, for magnetic audio device. "A guy named Vahan Simidian's the owner, and his chief technical officer's a guy named Dragoslav Colich. Everybody else was making bigger speakers, adding more power, adding longer wave guides, which is the bullhorn part of the speaker; it's like a barrel. Anyway, instead of using a speaker this guy's using magnets, and instead of using an acoustical wave he's using something called a planar wave. I'll let them tell you what it is."

Craning his neck to read a number on a wall, Heal said, "This is it," and pulled into a parking lot outside a low cement building. "When he demonstrated the system, I went a hundred yards down the road, and he's playing a Queen record," he said. "As the drummer is hitting his drum, I can feel it on my chest so tangibly that I look down to see if my shirt is moving. As I'm leaving, he says, 'If you think that's something, I can make the sound go a mile.' So we picked a date, and I brought a sixty-thousand-watt generator. We took a G.P.S. and measured a mile, and I listened to a Frank Sinatra record and everything was there—the lyrics, the orchestra, the cymbal sound, everything. We couldn't even see where the sound was coming from anymore. At three-quarters of a mile, we had trusties from the jail raking leaves, and they were putting in music requests."

Heal started collecting papers beside

him on the seat. "We don't even know everything it will do; it's just started the trials," he said. "First thing, though, it replaces conventional hailing devices. Second thing is, it has non-lethal capabilities. I have to give you a little class. All non-lethal agents are debilitating, not incapacitating. They don't force you to leave an area; they just make it difficult for you to remain. Tear gas is weather-dependent, though. If the wind blows the wrong way, it affects everyone in the area; it's dangerous to use around schools and hospitals. The human brain is susceptible to certain frequencies that have nothing to do with volume. Most people cringe when you scrape a fingernail on a blackboard. What if we create a repellent sound? Will it make people avoid an area? We don't have a weather-dependency system, then, we don't have collateral damage, and because we can do it with clarity and be specific in our target we have an advantage.

"The third thing with this is that, after we started working with them, they had a major technical breakthrough. They made it so you can throw a switch and turn it into a microphone. On rescues, we can point it at somebody and have them hear us, and then we can have him talk to us, even though there's a helicopter, say. He can participate in his own rescue."

Heal got out of the car, and I followed him to the company's door. "First time I came here, I thought, My job is to encourage this guy, not crush him," he said.

Vahan Simidian turned out to be tall, with dark curly hair. He took us into a warehouse that had a big garage door at one end which had been raised. On a tripod in the parking lot was a square block of speakers about four feet by four feet. Beside it stood Colich, who was a few inches smaller than Simidian and a little heavier. Simidian said that the membrane, which he called a diaphragm, vibrated like vocal cords. "The difference between our technology and the rest of the world's is that our sound goes out in parallel beams," he said. "It's called a plane sound source."

I asked what that was, and Simidian said, "Drag, how do you explain a plane source?"

"Big surface that vibrates and creates tones that project forward," Colich said. "What you normally have is a single-point source, where everything radiates outward."

Oh, baby, then we go on our seventeenth date and I grab your hand— but then I let go because I don't want to rush things. And anyway our strawberry milkshakes are here.
MRG

PHONE WAITING-FOR-MARRIAGE

• •

"Conically," Simidian said.

"Spherically," Colich said.

It is as if a line of sound had left the magnet speakers and remained intact, Colich explained, instead of a wave in the shape of a V that became wider and weaker as it travelled.

Simidian walked us about a hundred yards across the parking lot and had Colich play a sound that he called a wobble tone, which was a little like a siren. I didn't so much hear it as feel that I was in its way.

"Play the machine gun," Simidian yelled. "The .50 calibre."

The report sounded as if it had come from a weapon the size of a backhoe. All around us, birds took to the air.

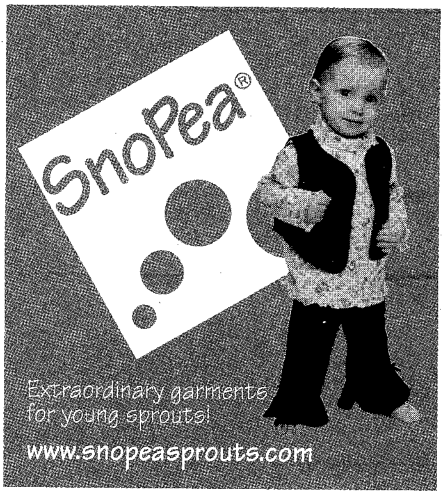
Heal was grinning. "Did you hear the brass shells hitting the ground?" he asked.

"If there's crowds around, and they hear that, they're going to disperse," Simidian said.

We walked across the parking lot and into the warehouse. At the far end of the room was a microphone. Simidian gave me a pair of headphones, then he walked outside, so that the microphone was about eighty feet away from him. I stood with my back to him while he crushed a dry leaf, and I heard it as if it were in my own hands and I was holding them against my ear.

"Keeping the good guy away from the bad guy until the good guy knows what he's up to is the point," Simidian said. He told me that two governments—the American and the British—were using the speakers in Iraq to clear neighborhoods and to tell people at checkpoints to stop.

Heal asked Simidian if he could play the dog tape for me, but Simidian said he didn't know where it was. "Everyone's frightened of that," Heal said. A deputy had played the tape outside a junk yard where he thought a gang member was hiding. Then, Heal said, the deputy announced that he was sending in the dogs, and a stream of gang members came out. ♦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SHOUTS & MURMURS

AWAKE

BY JENNY ALLEN

I'm up. Are you up?

I'm trying to go back to sleep. But I'm awake. Awake awake awake.

That's what Buddha said. Buddha said, "I am awake." Buddha got that idea, that whole concept, from a middle-aged woman, I'm sure.

Not that this sleepless business ends after a certain age. I think you have to die first.

If you added up all the hours I've been awake in the middle of the night, it would come to years by now. Fifty may be the new forty, but, for the sleepless woman, fifty is the new eighty.

Thank you, that's a very good idea, but I already took a sleeping pill. I fell asleep right away—it's bliss, that drugged drifting off—but now I'm awake again. That always happens! I fall asleep, boom, and then, four or five hours later, I wake up—like it's my turn on watch, like I've just had a full night's sleep. But if I act as if I've had a full night's sleep, if I get up and do things, I will be pitiful tomorrow. I will confuse the TV remote with the cordless phone and try to answer it. I will not notice any of my typos—I will type "pubic school" this and "pubic school" that in e-mails to people whose public schools I am looking at for my daughter. I will say, "I saw store at the Shelly," and then I will have to make one of those dumb Alzheimer's jokes.

I could take another sleeping pill, but I worry about that. I worry about liking sleeping pills too much. Sleeping pills always make me think of Judy Garland. Poor Judy.

It's funny about the name Judy, isn't it? No one names anyone Judy anymore—do you ever see five-year-old Judys?—but half the women I know are named Judy. You would probably be safe, when meeting any woman over fifty, just to say, "Nice to meet you, Judy." Most of the time you would be right.

I am going to lie here and fall asleep counting all the Judys I know.

Thirteen Judys. Including my husband's ex-wife. Who's very nice, by the way.

I'm still awake.

Some people who knew my husband before I knew him call me Judy. "Hi, Judy, how are you?" they say, and I never correct them. Who can blame them, when they know so many Judys? Although I do sort of hope that later they will realize they have called me by my husband's ex-wife's name and take note of what a nice person I must be not to have corrected them.

Are all my Judy friends up, like me? Judy in Brooklyn, are you up? Judy on Amsterdam Avenue, Judy in Lincoln Towers, Judy in Morningside Heights, Judy on Riverside Drive? I'm here in bed imagining that I can see all of you—I probably *could* see a few of you from my window if you waved at me. I feel like the teacher on "Romper Room" when I was little. She used to hold a big magnifying glass the size of a tennis racquet in front of her face, so that it was between her and you, and she would say, "I see Nina, and Becky, and Scott, and Glenn, and Judy . . ."

I see them. I see all my Judys, and I see Martha and Angeline and Eden, and Ellie and Goldie and Jackie and Wendy, and everyone in my book group. I see them lying there in their nighties, their faces shiny with night cream. Some of us lie alone, some of us lie next to another person, who is, enragingly, sleeping like a log. How can these people next to us sleep so profoundly? They snore, they shake their restless-leg-syndrome legs all over their side of the bed, they mutter protests from their dreams—"I didn't say Elmira!" and "It's not yours!" They're making a regular racket, and yet they sleep on.

Sleepless friends, I am thinking about you. Ginny, did you decide what to do about day camp for your grandchildren this summer? Martha, what are you reading to help you fall back asleep? Will you call me tomorrow and tell me about it? Mimi, are you up thinking about who you haven't had lunch with lately? You're eighty-seven years old. That's a hundred and thirty-nine in wakeful-woman years. Congratulations for hanging in there.

Sometimes I fall asleep to the television. And a strange thing happens: no matter what I have fallen asleep watching, when I wake up in the middle of the night "Girls Gone Wild" is on. I never turn the channel to "Girls Gone Wild," I promise. It's just on. My goodness, those girls must sleep well, when they finally do sleep. I have to change the channel right away when I see "Girls Gone Wild," because I always think about the girls' mothers, and that upsets me. I worry about their mothers, up in the middle of the night, waking up to "Girls Gone Wild": "That one looks just like Melanie—oh, my God."

Look. "Law & Order" is on. I've seen this episode, of course. Do they run the same ones over and over, or is it that I have seen every one there is? What a scary thought. Fortunately, I never remember what happens after the opening scene, when they find the dead person, so I can watch them all over again.

That was a good one. Although one day maybe there will be a teen-ager on the show who isn't a psycho killer.

I'm still awake.

Friends, are you all still up? It seems inefficient somehow for all of us to be awake separately; wouldn't it be great if we could pool all our individual little tributaries of wakeful energy into one mighty Mississippi, and then harness it, like a W.P.A. project, like the Hoover Dam? We could power something. We could light up Manhattan. We could light up Manhattan and have a huge party for all the women who are awake.

I should read. Reading is too hard for the dead of night. Reading has too many words in it. Including words I might not know. If I read a word I don't know, I will feel compelled to scrawl it on whatever piece of paper is on my bedside table and then hope that I'll be able to read my writing tomorrow, and will remember to look up the word in the dictionary. If I am too lazy to write down the word, I will have to make a decision about whether to dog-ear the page—bad reader citizenship!—and I don't want the burden of that choice now, in the middle of the night.

Also, I know that even if I do look a word up tomorrow I won't remember the definition next week. I keep looking up the same words over and over. "Fungible." "Heliotrope." How many times am I supposed to look up "heliotrope"? I used to remember the definitions, but I haven't for years. I still know a lot of words, though. "Cleave" is a funny word, because it means to sunder, and, strangely, it also means to stick to. "Ouster" is a funny word. "Ouster" means the act of getting rid of someone, but it also means the person who does the getting rid of. Who should be the ousterer. "Timorous" means timid, but why not just say "timid"?

Timmy was the name of the boy in "Lassie," the television show. The theme music for the show was melancholy, shockingly so. It made you yearn, it made you homesick, even as you watched it in your own home.

I'm still awake. Only now everything is sort of blending together. It's the time of night when I think I may finally be losing my mind for good. The theme song from "Lassie" is blending into the Brownie song, the one about "I've something in my pocket, it belongs across my face," about a Great Big Brownie Smile. Where's my older daughter's Girl Scout sash? Why didn't the younger one ever do Girl Scouts? What's in that pot-roast recipe besides a cinnamon stick and horseradish and a can of cranberry sauce? What was my old Zip Code when I lived on Third Avenue? Why didn't I submit that expense report worth a thousand dollars nine years ago?

Instead of going crazy, maybe I will just lie here and regret things. Let's see . . . Can't I blame the really big mistakes on others? Didn't they fail me, didn't they provoke me, didn't they drive me to it? Didn't they just really strain my patience?

No, face it, you have some things to regret. Now you have to sit with it, as Buddha would say—or, in your case, lie with it. Not exactly the path to Slumberland.

Here's the question: Have you done the love thing? The unconditional-love thing? Have you done it with your children? And with the person lying next to you, the one with the jitterbugging legs?

Oh, look. The city sky is turning from purplish black to . . . brown. It's going to be daylight soon. Dawn! How are you, Dawn? How's my girl? As long as you're up, I might as well get up, too. We can keep each other company. ◆

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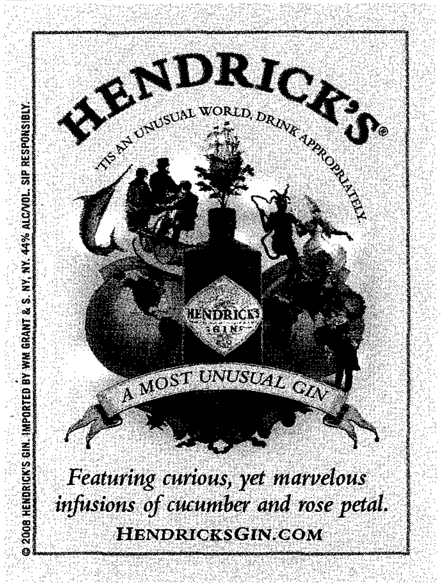

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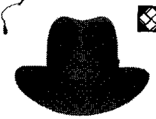

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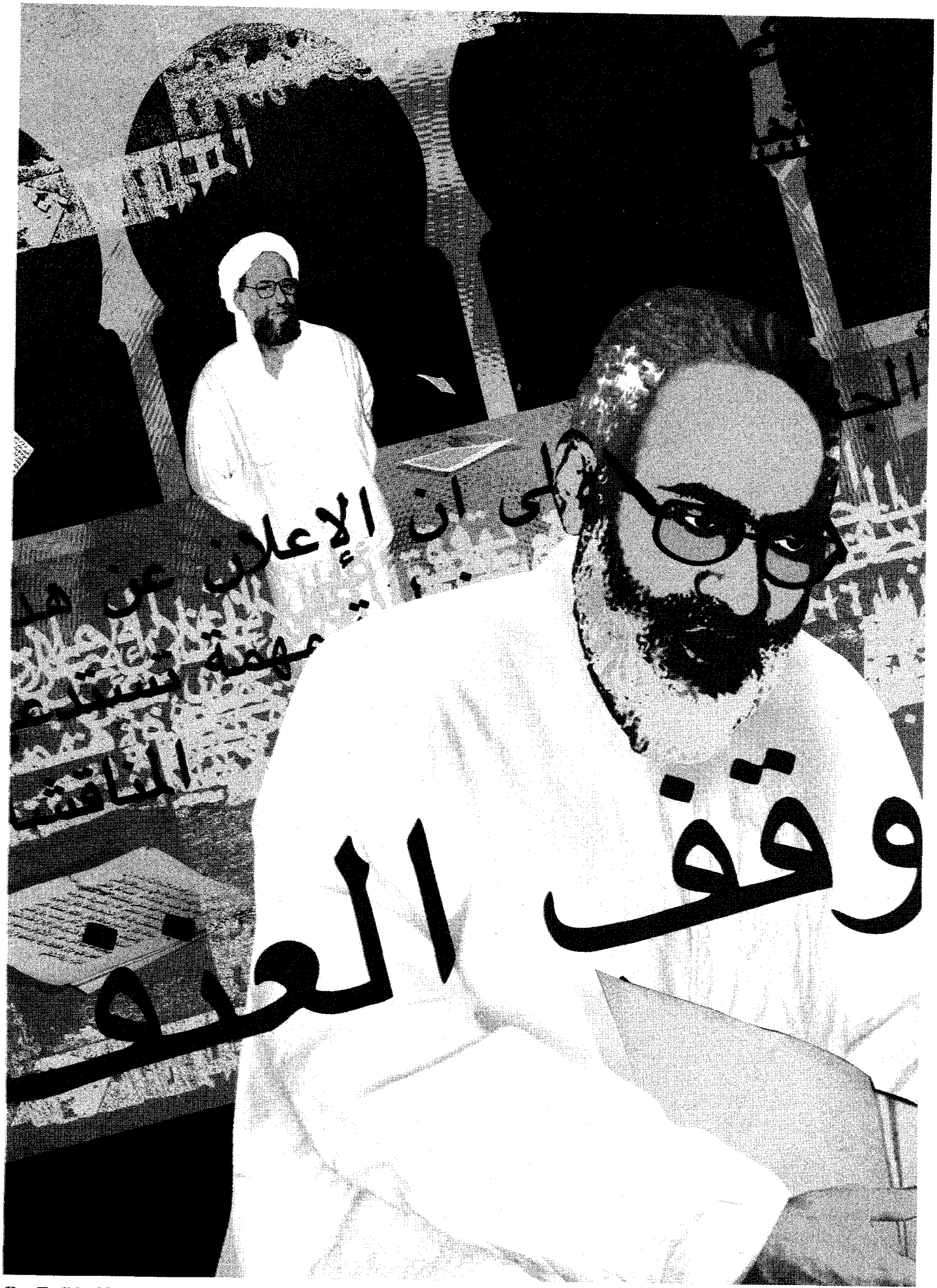
لى ان الإعلان عن هد
مهمة تستط
المناقشا
وقف
العنف

Dr. Fadl had laid the intellectual foundation for Al Qaeda's murderous acts. His defection posed a terrible threat.

A REPORTER AT LARGE

THE REBELLION WITHIN

An Al Qaeda mastermind questions terrorism.

BY LAWRENCE WRIGHT

Last May, a fax arrived at the London office of the Arabic newspaper *Asharq Al Awsat* from a shadowy figure in the radical Islamist movement who went by many names. Born Sayyid Imam al-Sharif, he was the former leader of the Egyptian terrorist group Al Jihad, and known to those in the underground mainly as Dr. Fadl. Members of Al Jihad became part of the original core of Al Qaeda; among them was Ayman al-Zawahiri, Osama bin Laden's chief lieutenant. Fadl was one of the first members of Al Qaeda's top council. Twenty years ago, he wrote two of the most important books in modern Islamist discourse; Al Qaeda used them to indoctrinate recruits and justify killing. Now Fadl was announcing a new book, rejecting Al Qaeda's violence. "We are prohibited from committing aggression, even if the enemies of Islam do that," Fadl wrote in his fax, which was sent from Tora Prison, in Egypt.

Fadl's fax confirmed rumors that imprisoned leaders of Al Jihad were part of a trend in which former terrorists renounced violence. His defection posed a terrible threat to the radical Islamists, because he directly challenged their authority. "There is a form of obedience that is greater than the obedience accorded to any leader, namely, obedience to God and His Messenger," Fadl wrote, claiming that hundreds of Egyptian jihadists from various factions had endorsed his position.

Two months after Fadl's fax appeared, Zawahiri issued a handsomely produced video on behalf of Al Qaeda. "Do they now have fax machines in Egyptian jail cells?" he asked. "I wonder if they're connected to the same line as the electric-shock machines." This sarcastic dismissal was perhaps intended to dampen anxiety about Fadl's manifesto—which was to be published serially, in newspapers in Egypt and Kuwait—among Al Qaeda insiders. Fadl's previous work, after all, had laid the intellectual foundation for Al Qaeda's murderous acts. On a recent trip to Cairo, I met with Gamal Sultan, an Islamist writer and a publisher there. He said of Fadl, "Nobody can challenge the legitimacy of this person. His writings could have far-reaching effects not only in Egypt but on leaders outside it." Usama Ayub, a former member of Egypt's Islamist community, who is now the director of the Islamic Center in Münster, Germany, told me, "A lot of people base their work on Fadl's writings, so he's very important. When Dr. Fadl speaks, everyone should listen."

Although the debate between Fadl and Zawahiri was esoteric and bitterly personal, its ramifications for the West were potentially enormous. Other Islamist organizations had gone through violent phases before deciding that such actions led to a dead end. Was this happening to Al Jihad? Could it happen even to Al Qaeda?

A THEORIST OF JIHAD

The roots of this ideological war within Al Qaeda go back forty years, to 1968, when two precocious teen-agers met at Cairo University's medical school. Zawahiri, a student there, was then seventeen, but he was already involved in clandestine Islamist activity. Although he was not a natural leader, he had an eye for ambitious, frustrated youths like him who believed that destiny was whispering in their ear.

So it was not surprising that he was drawn to a tall, solitary classmate named Sayyid Imam al-Sharif. Admired for his brilliance and his tenacity, Imam was expected to become either a great surgeon or a leading cleric. (The name "al-Sharif" denotes the family's descent from the Prophet Muhammad.) His father, a headmaster in Beni Suef, a town seventy-five miles south of Cairo, was conservative, and his son followed suit. He fasted twice a week and, each morning after dawn prayers, studied the Koran, which he had memorized by the time he finished sixth grade. When he was fifteen, the Egyptian government enrolled him in a boarding school for exceptional students, in Cairo. Three years later, he entered medical school, and began preparing for a career as a plastic surgeon, specializing in burn injuries.

Both Zawahiri and Imam were pious and high-minded, prideful, and rigid in their views. They tended to look at matters of the spirit in the same way they regarded the laws of nature—as a series of immutable rules, handed down by God. This mind-set was typical of the engineers and technocrats who disproportionately made up the extremist branch of Salafism, a school of thought intent on returning Islam to the idealized early days of the religion.

Imam learned that Zawahiri belonged to a subterranean world. "I knew from another student that Ayman was part of an Islamic group," he later told a reporter for *Al Hayat*, a pan-Arabic newspaper. The group came to be called Al Jihad. Its discussions centered on the idea that real Islam no longer existed, because Egypt's rulers had turned away from Islamic law, or Sharia, and were steering believers away from salvation and toward secular modernity. The young members of Al Jihad decided that they had to act.

In doing so, these men were placing their lives, and perhaps their families, in terrible jeopardy. Egypt's military government, then led by Gamal Abdel Nasser, had a vast network of informers and secret police. The prisons were brimming with Islamist detainees, locked away in dungeons where torture was routine. Despite this repressive atmosphere, an increasing number of Egyptians, disillusioned with Nasser's socialist, secular government, were turning to the mosque for political answers. In 1967, Nasser led Egypt and its Arab allies into a disastrous

JOHN RITTER

confrontation with Israel, which crushed the Egyptian Air Force in an afternoon. The Sinai Peninsula soon passed to Israeli control. The Arab world was traumatized, and that deepened the appeal of radical Islamists, who argued that Muslims had fallen out of God's favor, and that only by returning to the religion as it was originally practiced could Islam regain its supremacy in the world.

In 1977, Zawahiri asked Imam to join his group, presenting himself as a mere delegate of the organization. Imam told *Al Hayat* that his agreement was conditional upon meeting the Islamic scholars who Zawahiri insisted were in the group; clerical authority was essential to validate the drastic deeds these men were contemplating. The meeting never happened. "Ayman was a charlatan who used secrecy as a pretext," Imam said. "I discovered that Ayman himself was the emir of this group, and that it didn't have any sheikhs."

In 1981, soldiers affiliated with Al Jihad assassinated the President of Egypt, Anwar Sadat—who had signed a peace treaty with Israel two years earlier—but the militants failed to seize power. Sadat's successor, Hosni Mubarak, rounded up thousands of Islamists, including Zawahiri, who was charged with smuggling weapons. Before he was arrested, Zawahiri went to Imam's house and urged him to flee, according to Zawahiri's uncle Mahfouz Azzam. Imam's son Ismail al-Sharif, who now lives in Yemen, says that this never happened. In fact, he claims, Zawahiri later put Imam in danger, by disclosing his name to interrogators.

During the next three years, these two men, who had once been so profoundly alike, began to diverge. Zawahiri, who had given up the names of other Al Jihad members as well, was humiliated by this betrayal. Prison hardened him; torture sharpened his appetite for revenge. He abandoned the ideological purity of his youth. Imam, by contrast, had not been forced to face the limits of his belief. He had slipped out of Egypt and made his way to Peshawar, Pakistan, where the Afghan resistance against the Soviet occupation of Afghanistan was based. Imam left his real identity behind and became Dr. Fadl. It was common for those who joined the jihad to take a nom de guerre. He adopted the persona of the revolutionary intellectual, in the tradition of Leon Trotsky and Che Guevara. Instead of engaging in combat, Fadl worked as a surgeon for the injured fighters and became a spiritual guide to the jihad.

Zawahiri finished serving his sentence in 1984, and also fled Egypt. He was soon reunited in Peshawar with Fadl, who had become the director of a Red Crescent hospital there. Their relationship had turned edgy and competitive, and, besides, Fadl held a low opinion of Zawahiri's abilities as a surgeon. "He asked me to stand with him and teach him how to perform operations," Fadl told *Al Hayat*. "I taught him until he could perform them on his own. Were it not for that, he would have been exposed, as he had contracted for a job for which he was unqualified."

In the mid-eighties, Fadl became Al Jihad's emir, or chief. (Fadl told *Al Hayat* that this was untrue, saying that his role was merely one of offering "Sharia guidance.") Zawahiri, whose reputation had been stained by his prison confessions, was left to handle tactical operations. He had to defer to Fadl's superior learning in Islamic jurisprudence. The jihadis who came to Peshawar revered Fadl for his encyclopedic knowledge of the Koran and the Hadith—the sayings of the Prophet. Usama Ayub, who was in Peshawar at the time, remembered, "He would say, Get this book, volume so-and-so, and he would quote it perfectly—without the book in his hand!"

Kamal Helbawy, a former spokesman for the Muslim Brotherhood, the Egyptian Islamist group, was also in Peshawar, and remembers Fadl as a "haughty, dominating presence," who frequently lambasted Muslims who didn't believe in the same doctrines. A former member of Al Qaeda says of Fadl, "He used to lecture for four or five hours at a time. He would say that anything the government does has to come from God, and if that's not the case then people should be allowed to topple the ruler by any means necessary." Fadl remained so much in the background, however, that some newer members of Al Jihad thought that Zawahiri was actually their emir. Fadl is "not a social man—he's very isolated," according to Hani al-Sibai, an Islamist attorney who knew both men. "Ayman was the one in front, but the real leader was Dr. Fadl."

Fadl resented the attention that Zawahiri received. (In the interview with *Al Hayat*, Fadl said that Zawahiri was "enamored of the media and a showoff.") And yet he let Zawahiri take the public role and give voice to ideas and doctrines that came from his own mind, not Zawahiri's. This dynamic eventually became the source of an acrimonious dispute between the two men.

THE RIFT

In Peshawar, Fadl devoted himself to formalizing the rules of holy war. The jihadis needed a text that would school them in the proper way to fight battles whose real objective was not victory over the Soviets but martyrdom and eternal salvation. "The Essential Guide for Preparation" appeared in 1988, as the Afghan jihad was winding down. It quickly became one of the most important texts in the jihadis' training.

The "Guide" begins with the premise that jihad is the natural state of Islam. Muslims must always be in conflict with nonbelievers, Fadl asserts, resorting to peace only in moments of abject weakness. Because jihad is, above all, a religious exercise, there are divine rewards to be gained. He who gives money for jihad will be compensated in Heaven, but not as much as the person who acts. The greatest prize goes to the martyr. Every able-bodied believer is obligated to engage in jihad, since most Muslim countries are ruled by infidels who must be forcibly removed, in order to bring about an Islamic state. "The way to bring an end to the rulers' unbelief is armed rebellion," the "Guide" states. Some Arab governments regarded the book as so dangerous that anyone caught with a copy was subject to arrest.

On August 11, 1988, Dr. Fadl attended a meeting in Peshawar with several senior leaders of Al Jihad, along with Abdullah Azzam, a Palestinian who oversaw the recruitment of Arabs to the cause. They were joined by a protégé of Azzam's, a young Saudi named Osama bin Laden. The Soviets had already announced their intention to withdraw from Afghanistan, and the prospect of victory awakened many old dreams among these men. They were not the same dreams, however. The leaders of Al Jihad, especially Zawahiri, wanted to use their well-trained warriors to overthrow the Egyptian government. Azzam longed to turn the attention of the Arab mujahideen to Palestine. Neither had the money or the resources to pursue such goals. Bin Laden, on the other hand, was rich, and he had his own vision: to create an all-Arab foreign legion that would pursue the retreating Soviets into Central Asia and also fight against the Marxist government that was then in control of South Yemen. According to Montasser al-Zayyat, an Islamist lawyer in Cairo who is Zawahiri's biographer, Fadl proposed supporting bin Laden with members of Al Jihad. Combining the Saudi's money with the Egyptians' expertise, the men who met that day formed a new group, called Al Qaeda. Fadl was part of its inner circle. "For years after the launching of Al Qaeda, they would do nothing without consulting me," he boasted to *Al Hayat*.

After the Soviet withdrawal from Afghanistan, in 1989, Zawahiri and most members of Al Jihad relocated to Sudan, where bin Laden, who had fled Saudi Arabia after falling out with the royal family, had set up operations. Zawahiri urged Fadl and his family to join them there. Fadl, who was completing what he considered his masterwork, "The Compendium of the Pursuit of Divine Knowledge," agreed to go. "Zawahiri picked us up from the Khartoum airport and took us to our flat," Fadl's son Ismail al-Sharif told me. "Zawahiri said, 'You don't need to work, we will pay your salary. We just want you to finish your book.'"

From Sudan, members of Al Jihad watched enviously as a much larger organization, the Islamic Group, waged open warfare on the Egyptian state. Both groups wished for the overthrow of the secular government and the institution of a theocracy, but they differed in their methods. Al Jihad was organized as a network of clandestine cells, centered in Cairo; Zawahiri's plan was to take over the country by means of a military coup. One of the founders of the Islamic Group was Karam Zuhdy, a former student of agricultural management at Asyut University. The group was a broad, aboveground movement that was determined to launch a social revolution. Members undertook to enforce Islamic values by "compelling good and driving out evil." They ransacked video stores, music recitals, cinemas, and liquor stores. They demanded that women dress in *hijab*, and rampaged against Egypt's Coptic minority, bombing its churches. They attacked a regional headquarters of the state security service, cutting off the head of the commander and killing a large number of policemen. Blood on the ground became the measure of the Islamic Group's success, and it was all the more thrilling because the murder was done in the name of God.

In 1981, Zuhdy was caught in the Egyptian government's roundup of Islamists after the Sadat assassination, and for three years he lived in the same cellblock as Zawahiri, in the enormous Tora Prison complex. They respected each other but were not friends. "Dr. Ayman was polite and well-mannered," Zuhdy recalls. "He was not a military man—he was a doctor. You couldn't tell that he would be the Ayman al-Zawahiri of today." Zuhdy remained in prison for two decades after Zawahiri finished serving his three-year sentence.

In 1990, the spokesman for the Islamic Group was shot dead in the street in Cairo. There was little doubt that the government was behind the killing, and soon afterward the Islamic Group announced its intention to respond with a terror campaign. Dozens of police officers were murdered. Intellectuals were also on its hit list, including Naguib Mahfouz, the Nobel Prize-winning novelist, who was stabbed in the neck. (He survived.) Next, the Islamic Group targeted the tourist industry, declaring that it corrupted Egyptian society by bringing "alien customs and morals which offend Islam." Members of the group attacked tourists with homemade bombs on buses and trains, and fired on cruise ships that plied the Nile. The economy swooned. During the nineties, more than twelve hundred people were killed in terror attacks in Egypt.

The exiled members of Al Jihad decided that they needed to enter the fray. Fadl disagreed; despite his advocacy of endless warfare against unjust rulers, he contended that the Egyptian government was too powerful and that the insurgency would fail. He also complained that Al Jihad was undertaking operations only to emulate the Islamic Group. "This is senseless activity that will bring no benefit," he warned. His point was quickly proved when the Egyptian security services captured a computer containing the names of Zawahiri's followers, nearly a thousand of whom were arrested. In retaliation, Zawahiri authorized a suicide bombing that targeted Hasan al-Alfi, the Interior Minister, in August, 1993. Alfi survived the attack with a broken arm. Two months later, Al Jihad attempted to kill Egypt's Prime Minister, Atef Sidqi, in a bombing. The Prime Minister was not hurt, but the

YOU
ARE
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explosion killed a twelve-year-old schoolgirl.

Embarrassed by these failures, members of Al Jihad demanded that their leader resign. Many were surprised to discover that the emir was Fadl. He willingly gave up the post, and Zawahiri soon became the leader of Al Jihad in name as well as in fact.

In 1994, Fadl moved to Yemen, where he resumed his medical practice and tried to put the work of jihad behind him. Before he left, however, he gave a copy of his finished manuscript to Zawahiri, saying that it could be used to raise money. Few books in recent history have done as much damage.

Fadl wrote the book under yet another pseudonym, Abdul Qader bin Abdul Aziz, in part because the name was not Egyptian and would further mask his identity. But his continual use of aliases also allowed him to adopt positions that were somewhat in conflict with his stated personal views. Given Fadl's critique of Al Jihad's violent operations as "senseless," the intransigent and bloodthirsty document that Fadl gave to Zawahiri must have come as a surprise.

"The Compendium of the Pursuit of Divine Knowledge," which is more than a thousand pages long, starts with the assertion that salvation is available only to the perfect Muslim. Even an exemplary believer can wander off the path to Paradise with a single misstep. Fadl contends that the rulers of Egypt and other Arab countries are apostates of Islam. "The infidel's rule, his prayers, and the prayers of those who pray behind him are invalid," Fadl decrees. "His blood is legal." He declares that Muslims have a duty to wage jihad against such leaders; those who submit to an infidel ruler are themselves infidels, and doomed to damnation. The same punishment awaits those who participate in democratic elections. "I say to Muslims in all candor that secular, nationalist democracy opposes your religion and your doctrine, and in submitting to it you leave God's book behind," he writes. Those who labor in government, the police, and the courts are infidels, as is anyone who works for peaceful change; religious war, not political reform, is the sole mandate. Even devout believers walk a tightrope over the abyss. "A man may enter the faith in many ways, yet be expelled from it by just one deed," Fadl cautions. Anyone who believes otherwise is a heretic and deserves to be slaughtered.

In writing this book, Fadl also expands upon the heresy of *takfir*—the excommunication of one Muslim by another. To deny the faith of a believer—without persuasive evidence—is a grievous injustice. The Prophet Muhammad is said to have remarked, "When a man calls his brother an infidel, we can be sure that one of them is indeed an infidel." Fadl defines Islam so narrowly, however, that nearly everyone falls outside the sacred boundaries. Muslims who follow his thinking believe that they have a divine right to kill anyone who disagrees with their straitened view of what constitutes a Muslim. The "Compendium" gave Al Qaeda and its allies a warrant to murder all who stood in their way. Zawahiri was ecstatic. According to Fadl, Zawahiri told him, "This book is a victory from Almighty God." And yet, even for Zawahiri, the book went too far.

When Fadl moved to Yemen, he considered his work in revolutionary Islam to be complete. His son Ismail al-Sharif told *Al Jarida*, a Kuwaiti newspaper, that Fadl cut off all contact with bin Laden, complaining that "he doesn't listen to the advice of others, he listens only to himself." Fadl took his family to the mountain town of Ibb. He had two wives, with four sons and two daughters between them. He called himself Dr. Abdul Aziz al-Sharif. On holidays, the family took walks around the town. Otherwise, he spent his spare time reading. "He didn't care to watch television, except for the news," Ismail al-Sharif told me. "He didn't like to make friends, because he was a fugitive. He thinks having too many relations is a waste of time."

While awaiting a work permit from Yemen's government, Fadl volunteered his services at a local hospital. His skills quickly became evident. "People were coming from all over the country," his son told me. The fact that Fadl was working without pay in such a primitive facility—rather than opening a practice in a gleaming modern clinic in Kuwait or Europe—drew unwelcome attention. He had the profile of a man with something to hide.

While in Ibb, Fadl learned that his book had been bowdlerized. His original manuscript contained a barbed critique of the jihadi movement, naming specific organizations and individuals whose actions he disdained. He scolded the Islamic Group in particular, at a time when Zawahiri was attempting to engineer a merger with it. Those sections of

"I'm taking you off the Henderson account and putting you into this steel drum."

the book had been removed. Other parts were significantly altered. Even the title had been changed, to "Guide to the Path of Righteousness for Jihad and Belief." The thought that a less qualified writer had taken liberties with his masterpiece sent him into a fury. He soon discovered the perpetrator. A member of Al Jihad had come to Yemen for a job. "He informed me that Zawahiri alone was the one who committed these perversions," Fadl said. In 1995, Zawahiri travelled to Yemen and appealed to Fadl for forgiveness. By this time, Zawahiri had suspended his operations in Egypt, and his organization was floundering. Now his former emir refused to see him. "I do not know anyone in the history of Islam prior to Ayman al-Zawahiri who engaged in such lying, cheating, forgery, and betrayal of trust by transgressing against someone else's book," the inflamed author told *Al Hayat.* Zawahiri and Fadl have not spoken since, but their war of words was only beginning.

"Is 'oblivious' the same as 'undecided'?"

• •

THE GREAT PRISON DEBATES

Meanwhile, a furtive conversation was taking place among the imprisoned leaders of the Islamic Group. Karam Zuhdy remained incarcerated, along with more than twenty thousand Islamists. "We started growing older," he says. "We started examining the evidence. We began to read books and reconsider." The prisoners came to feel that they had been manipulated into pursuing a violent path. Just opening the subject for discussion was extremely threatening, not only for members of the organization but for groups that had an interest in prolonging the clash with Egypt's government. Zuhdy points in particular to the Muslim Brotherhood. "These people, when we launched an initiative against violence, accused us of being weak," he says. "Instead of supporting us, they wanted us to continue the violence. We faced very strong opposition inside prison, outside prison, and outside Egypt."

In 1997, rumors of a possible deal between the Islamic Group and the Egyptian government reached Zawahiri, who was then hiding in an Al Qaeda safe house in Kandahar, Afghanistan. Montasser al-Zayyat, the Islamist lawyer, was brokering talks between the parties. Zayyat has often served as an emissary between the Islamists and the security apparatus, a role that makes him both universally distrusted and invaluable. In his biography of Zawahiri, "The Road to Al-Qaeda: The Story of Bin Laden's Right-Hand Man," Zayyat reports that Zawahiri called him in March of that year, when Zayyat arrived in London on business. "Why are you making the brothers angry?" Zawahiri asked him. Zayyat responded that jihad did not have to be restricted to an armed approach. Zawahiri urged Zayyat to change his mind, even promising that he could secure political asylum for him in London. "I politely rejected his offer," Zayyat writes.

The talks between the Islamic Group and the government remained secret until July, when one of the imprisoned leaders, who was on trial in a military court, stood up and announced to stunned observers the organization's intention to cease all violent activity. Incensed, Zawahiri wrote a letter addressed to the group's imprisoned leaders. "God only knows the grief I felt when I heard about this initiative and the negative impact it has caused," he wrote. "If we are going to stop now, why did we start in the first place?" In his opinion, the initiative was a surrender, "a massive loss for the jihadist movement as a whole."

To Zawahiri's annoyance, imprisoned members of Al Jihad also began to express an interest in joining the nonviolence initiative. "The leadership started to change its views," said Abdel Moneim Moneeb, who, in 1993, was charged with being a member of Al Jihad. Although Moneeb was never convicted, he spent fourteen years in an Egyptian prison. "At one point, you might mention this idea, and all the voices would drown you out. Later, it became possible." Independent thinking on the subject of violence was not easy when as many as thirty men were crammed into cells that were about nine feet by fifteen. Except for a few smuggled radios, the prisoners were largely deprived of sources of outside information. They occupied themselves with endless theological debates and glum speculation about where they had gone wrong. Eventually, though, these discussions prompted the imprisoned leaders of Al Jihad to open their own secret channel with the government.

Zawahiri became increasingly isolated. He understood that violence was the fuel that kept the radical Islamist organizations running; they had no future without terror. Together with several leaders of the Islamic Group who were living outside Egypt, he plotted a way to raise the stakes and permanently wreck the Islamic Group's attempt to reform itself. On November 17, 1997, just four months after the announcement of the nonviolence initiative, six young men entered the magnificent ruins of Queen Hatshepsut's temple, near Luxor. Hundreds of tourists were strolling through the grounds. For forty-five minutes, the killers shot randomly. A flyer was stuffed inside a mutilated body, identifying them as members of the Islamic Group. Sixty-two people died, not counting the killers, whose bodies were later found in a desert cave. They had apparently committed suicide. It was the worst terrorist incident in Egypt's bloody political history.

If Zawahiri and the exiled members of the Islamic Group hoped that this action would undermine the nonviolence initiative, they miscalculated. Zuhdy said, "We issued a statement in the newspaper that this action is a knife in our back." More important, the Egyptian people definitively turned against the violence that characterized the radical Islamist movement. The Islamic Group's imprisoned leaders wrote a series of books and pamphlets, collectively known as "the revisions," in which they formally explained their new thinking. "We wanted to relay our experience to young people to protect them from falling into the same mistakes we did," Zuhdy told me. He recalled that, in several television appearances, he "advised Ayman al-Zawahiri to read our responses with an open mind." In 1999, the Islamic Group called for an end to all armed action, not only in Egypt but also against America. "The Islamic Group does not believe in the creed of killing by nationality," one of its representatives later explained.

The new thinking among the leaders caught the attention of the clerics at Al Azhar, the thousand-year-old institution of Islamic learning in the center of ancient Cairo. During my stay in Egypt, I met with Sheikh Ali Gomaa, Egypt's Grand Mufti, at the nearby Dar al-Iftah, a government agency charged with issuing religious edicts—some five thousand fatwas a week. I waited for several hours in an antechamber while Gomaa finished a meeting with a delegation from the British House of Lords. Since 2003, when Gomaa was appointed Grand Mufti, a top religious post in Egypt, he has become a highly promoted champion of moderate Islam, with his own television show and occasional columns in *Al Ahram*, a government daily. He is the kind of cleric the West longs for, because of his assurances that there is no conflict with democratic rule and no need for theocracy. Gomaa has also become an advocate for Muslim women, who he says should have equal standing with men. His forceful condemnations of extreme forms of Islam have made him an object of hatred among Islamists and an icon among progressives, whose voices have been overpowered by the thunder of the radicals.

The door finally opened, and Gomaa emerged. He is fifty-five, tall and regal, with a round face and a trim beard. He wore a tan caftan and a white turban. He held a sprig of mint to his nose as an aide whispered to him my reasons for coming. On the wall behind his desk was a photograph of President Mubarak.

Gomaa was born in Beni Suef, the same town as Dr. Fadl. "I began going into the prisons in the nineteen-nineties," he told me. "We had debates and dialogues with the prisoners, which continued for more than three years. Such debates became the nucleus for the revisionist thinking."

Before the revisions were published, Gomaa reviewed them. "We accept the revisions conditionally, not as the true teachings of Islam but with the understanding that this process is like medicine for a particular time," he said. The fact that the prisoners were painfully reëxamining their thinking struck him as progress enough. "Terrorism springs from rigidity, and rigidity from literalism," he said. Each concept is a circle within a circle, and just getting a person to inch away from the center was a victory. "Our experience with such people is that it is very difficult to move them two or three degrees from where they are," he said. "It's easier to move from terrorism to extremism or from extremism to rigidity. We have not come across the person who can be moved all the way from terrorism to a normal life."

Decades ago, I taught English at the American University in Cairo, and since then I've watched the vast, moody city go through wrenching changes. I was living there when Nasser died, in 1970. At that time, there were no diplomatic relations between the U.S. and Egypt, and there were only a few hundred Americans in the country, but the Egyptian people loved America and what it stood for. When I visited the country in 2002, a few months after 9/11, I found the situation utterly reversed. The U.S. and Egyptian governments were close, but the Egyptian people were alienated and angry.

When I lived in Cairo, the population was about six million. Now it is three times that size. The unbearable congestion reflects the ungoverned quality of life in the city; pedestrians plunge into the anarchic traffic, their faces masked by fright or resignation. The virtual absence of any attempt to impose order—in the form of street lights or crosswalks—is characteristic of a government that has no sense of obligation to its people and seeks only to protect itself.

One day during my visit, I went to Cairo University, whose buildings are practically crumbling from neglect. There are nearly two hundred thousand students, a good many more than there were when Zawahiri and Fadl studied there. Although the campus was quiet, the mood of the students was troubled, if subdued. Their professors had been on strike because of low pay; in Cairo's poorer neighborhoods, riots had broken out over the cost of bread, and, in a middle-class area, residents had marched against pollution. The government's response to the desperation had been to round up eight hundred members of the Muslim Brotherhood and throw them in jail.

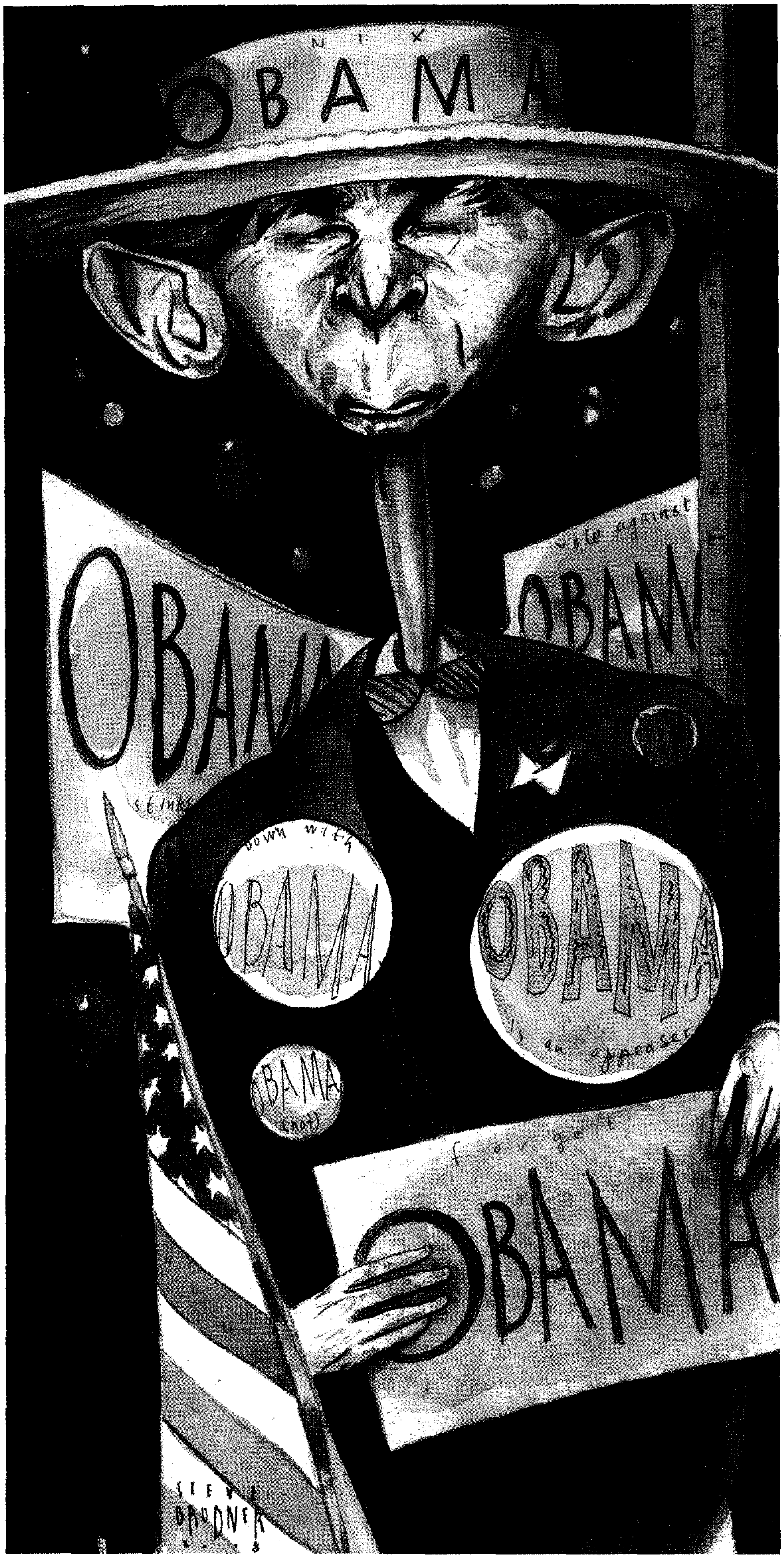
Several faculty members I spoke with repeated the exhausted formulations that were so common among Egyptian intellectuals several years ago—that terrorism is mainly the consequence of America's meddling in the Middle East, and that the attacks of September 11, 2001, were an inside job. The students were more cordial and less doctrinaire. They expressed interest in the U.S. Presidential campaign, which provided such a contrast to their own smothered political system. And they were impatient with Islamist dogma, which had done little to help ordinary Egyptians.

When I lived in Cairo under Nasser, there was still a sense of promise, despite the beating that the Arabs had taken from Israel. Economically, Egypt was on a par with India and South Korea. In the years since then, Egyptians have watched these former peers take a place among the developed nations. Countries that were once ruled by dictators and autocrats far more tyrannical than their own have refashioned themselves as liberal democracies or adopted systems that are more tolerant and responsive to citizens' needs. Egypt, meanwhile, has stood still. Extreme solutions began to seem the only ones equal to the challenge.

The jubilation felt by some Egyptians after 9/11 was tied, in part, to a hope that their lives would finally change, no doubt for the better. They expected that America, having been bloodied, would loosen its grip on the Muslim world. Without American support, the tyrants of the Middle East would be pushed aside by the Islamists, who posed the only potent alternative. But the U.S., instead of withdrawing, invaded two Muslim countries and became even more enmeshed in the politics of the region. Nevertheless, the audacity of Al Qaeda's attacks helped give radical Islamists credibility among people who were desperate for change. The years immediately after 9/11 presented an opportunity for the Islamists to offer their vision of a redeemed political system that brought about real improvements in people's lives. Instead, they continued to propagate their fantasies of theocracy and a caliphate, which had little chance of ever happening, and did nothing to address the actual problems facing the Egyptians: illiteracy, joblessness, and the desperation that came from watching the rest of the world pass them by. As a result, the young were eager for fresh thinking—a way to escape the dead end of radical Islam.

Before 9/11, the Egyptian government had quietly permitted the Islamic Group's leaders to carry their discussions about renouncing violence to members in other prisons around the country. After the attacks, state security decided to call more attention to these debates. Makram Mohamed Ahmed, who was close to the Minister of the Interior and was then the editor of *Al Mussawar*, a government weekly, was permitted to cover some of the discussions. "There were three generations in prison," he said. "They were in despair." Many of these Islamists had fantasized that they would be hailed as heroes by their soci-

NAKED CAMPAIGN BY STEVE BRODNER



The Superdelegate-in-Chief (with apologies to Diane Arbus's "Boy with a Straw Hat").

VISIT NEWYORKER.COM TO SEE STEVE BRODNER'S NAKED CAMPAIGN VIDEOS.

ety; instead, they were isolated and rejected. Now Karam Zuhdy and other imprisoned leaders were asking the radicals to accept that they had been deluded from the beginning. It was an overwhelming spiritual defeat. "We began going from prison to prison," Ahmed recalled. "Those boys would see their leaders giving them the new conception of the revisions." Ahmed recalls that many of the prisoners were angry. "They would say, 'You've been deceiving us for eighteen years! Why didn't you say this before?'"

Despite such objections, the imprisoned members of the Islamic Group largely accepted the leaders' new position. Ahmed says that he was initially skeptical of the prisoners' apparent repentance, which looked like a ploy for better treatment; however, several of the participants in the discussions had already been sentenced to death and were wearing the red clothing that identifies a prisoner as a condemned man. They had nothing to gain. Ahmed says that one of these prisoners told him, "I'm not offering these revisions for Mubarak! I don't care about this government. What is important is that I killed people—Copts, innocent persons—and before I meet God I should declare my sins." Then the man burst into tears.

The moral dimensions of the prisoners' predicament unfolded as they continued their discussions. What about the brother who was killed while carrying out an attack that we now realize was against Islam? Is he a martyr? If not, how do we console his family? One of the leaders proposed that if the brother who died was sincere, although genuinely deceived, he would still gain his heavenly reward; but because "everyone knows there is no advantage to violence, and that it is religiously incorrect," from now on such actions were doomed. What about correcting the sins of other Muslims? The Islamic Group had a reputation in Egypt for acting as a kind of moral police force, often quite savagely—for instance, throwing acid in the face of a woman who was wearing makeup. "We used to blame the people and say, 'The people are cowards,'" one of the leaders admitted. "None of us thought of saying that the violence we employed was abhorrent to them."

These emotional discussions were widely covered in the Egyptian press. Zuhdy publicly apologized to the Egyptian people for the Islamic Group's violent deeds, beginning with the murder of Sadat, whom he called a martyr. These riveting and courageous confessions also cast light on other organizations—in particular, the Muslim Brotherhood—that had never fully addressed their own violent pasts.

I went to the office of the Brotherhood to talk to Essam el-Erian, a prominent member of the movement. He is a small, defiant man with a large prayer mark on his forehead. I reminded him that when we last spoke, in April, 2002, he had just got out of prison. He laughed and said, "I've been back in prison twice more since then!" We sat in our stocking feet in the dim reception room. "From the start until now, the Muslim Brotherhood has been peaceful," he maintained. "We have only three or four instances of violence in our history, mainly assassinations." He added, "Those were individual instances and we condemned them as a group." But, in addition to the killings of political figures, terrorist attacks on the Jewish community in Cairo, and the attempted murder of Nasser, members of the Muslim Brotherhood took part in arson that destroyed some seven hundred and fifty buildings—mainly night clubs, theatres, hotels, and restaurants—in downtown Cairo in 1952, an attack that marked the end of the liberal, progressive, cosmopolitan direction that Egypt might have chosen. (The Muslim Brotherhood also created Hamas, which employs many of the same tactics now condemned by the Islamic Group.) And yet, unlike other radical movements, the Brotherhood has embraced political change as the only legitimate means to the goal of achieving an Islamic state. "We welcome these revisions, because we have called for many years to stop violence," Erian continued. "But these revisions are incomplete. They reject violence, but they don't offer a new strategy for reform and change." He pointed out that radical Islamists have long condemned the Muslim Brotherhood because of its willingness to compromise with the government and even to run candidates for office. "Now they are under pressure, because if they accept democratic change by democratic means they will be asked, 'What is the difference between you and the Muslim Brothers?' "

According to Zuhdy, the Egyptian government responded to the nonviolence initiative by releasing twelve thou-

THE CROWS AT 3 A.M.

The politically correct, perfect snow of Vermont
undulant under the lightly bruised, moonlit-backed-
becoming-storm-clouds slowing then speeding just above
the line of blue spruce on Mt. Mansfield here in
what I'm told is the state's "cloudiest county,"
vaguely an analogy for the plate tectonics of the blankets
constantly shifting from the left to the right side
of my body, pulling the heart, until by dawn I'm holding on,
waking with the cold, somehow looking at my hands
that, in the pearl dark, look like the first fall castings
of the sycamore, those pocked dry leaves
that were my mother's final hands: sallow
dying coloring, mapping liverspots, rootlike
veining texturing the underdermal surfaces. The test,

writes Fitzgerald, in an essay called "The Crack-Up,"
of a first-rate intelligence is the ability to hold
opposing ideas in the mind at the same time yet retain
the ability to function. He couldn't, he says, so he cracked
like a plate. He is trying to update Keats's
notion of "*Negative Capability*, that is
when a man is capable of being in uncertainties,

Mysteries, doubts, without any irritable reaching after fact
& reason—Coleridge, for instance, would let go
by a fine isolated verisimilitude
caught from the Penetralium of mystery,
from being incapable of remaining content with half-knowledge."
When I heard the crows, like raven-geese, rending the dark,
filling the falling snow with wings,

I thought, for a moment,
they were speaking or singing.
Crows at the hour—Fitzgerald again—of the dark night
of the soul, Poe-like crows chasing back and forth
in a quandary or a quarrel, up and down the Gihon.
Then they disappeared, let me drift back into sleep
to find my hands holding my mother's hands as if to help her
rise from the cold dead dream light of Vermont.
Stevens's some twenty blackbirds differ only in their scale:
the beauty of inflections and innuendos,
shadows passing out of hearing, out of sight,
but no less present in the settled order. Thus the river's moving,
the blackbird must be flying, two half-knowledges
or halves of one knowing. Those who love us who now live
in the air live in a loneliness we sometimes imagine.

—*Stanley Plumly*

sand five hundred members of the Islamic Group. Many of them had never been charged with a crime, much less tried and sentenced. Some were shattered by their confinement. "Imagine what twenty years of prison can do," Zuhdy said.

The prisoners returned to a society that was far more religious than the one they left. They must have been heartened to see most Egyptian women, who once enjoyed Western fashions, now wearing *hijab*, or completely hidden behind veils, like Saudis. Many more Egyptian men had prayer marks on their foreheads. Imams had become celebrities, their sermons blaring from televisions and radios. These newly released men might fairly have believed that they had achieved a great social victory through their actions and their sacrifice.

And yet the brutal indifference of the Egyptian government toward its people was unchanged. As the Islamists emerged from prison, new detainees took their place—protesters, liberals, bloggers, potential candidates for political office. The economy was growing, but the money was increasingly concentrated in the hands of the already wealthy; meanwhile, the price of food was shooting up so quickly that people were going hungry. Within a few months of being released, hundreds of the Islamists petitioned, unsuccessfully, to be let back into prison.

From the Egyptian government's point of view, the deal with the Islamic Group has proved to be an unparalleled success. According to Makram Mohamed Ahmed, the former editor of *Al Mussawar*, who witnessed the prison debates, there have been only two instances where members showed signs of returning to their former violent ways, and in both cases they were betrayed by informers in their own group. "Prison or time may have defeated them," Montasser al-Zayyat, the lawyer, says of the Islamic Group. "Some would call it a collapse."

THE MANIFESTO

Dr. Fadl was practicing surgery in Ibb when the 9/11 attacks took place. "We heard the reports first on BBC Radio," his son Ismail al-Sharif recalls. After his shift ended, Fadl returned home and watched the television coverage with his family. They asked him who he thought was responsible. "This action is from Al Qaeda, because there is no other group in the world that will kill themselves in a plane," he responded.

On October 28, 2001, two Yemeni intelligence officers came to Fadl's clinic to ask him some questions. He put them off. The director of the hospital persuaded Fadl to turn himself in, saying that he would pull some strings to protect him. Fadl was held in Ibb for a week before being transferred to government detention in the capital, Sanaa. The speaker of parliament and other prominent Yemeni politicians agitated unsuccessfully for his release.

Fadl was joined in prison by Yemeni members of Al Qaeda who had escaped the bombing of Afghanistan by American and coalition troops in the months after the attacks. They filled him in on details of the plot. In Fadl's opinion, the organization had committed "group suicide" by striking America, which was bound to retaliate severely. Indeed, nearly eighty per cent of Al Qaeda's members in Afghanistan were killed in the final months of 2001. "My father was very sad for the killing of Abu Hafs al-Masri, the military leader of Al Qaeda," Ismail al-Sharif told *Al Jarida*. "My father said that, with the death of Abu Hafs, Al Qaeda is finished, because the rest is a group of zeroes."

At first, the Yemenis weren't sure what to do with the celebrated jihadi philosopher. There were many Yemenis, even in the intelligence agencies, who sympathized with Al Qaeda. According to Sharif, at the beginning of 2002 Yemeni intelligence offered Fadl the opportunity to escape to any country he wanted. Fadl said that he would go to Sudan. But the promised release was postponed. The following year, Sharif has said, the offer was changed: either Fadl could seek political asylum or Egyptian authorities would come and get him. Fadl applied for asylum, but before he received a response he disappeared.

According to a 2005 report by Human Rights Watch, which had followed his case, Fadl was taken from his cell and smuggled onto a plane to Cairo. For more than two years, Fadl—who had been tried and convicted in absentia on terrorism charges—was held by Egyptian authorities, who are notorious for their rough treatment of political prisoners. He was eventually transferred to the

Scorpion, a facility inside Tora Prison where major political figures were held. Fadl remains there to this day, under a life sentence. It was clear that he was getting special treatment. His son says that he has a private room with a bath and a small kitchen, adding, "He has a refrigerator and a television, and the newspaper comes every day." Fadl passes the time reading and trying not to gain weight. (The Egyptian authorities rejected multiple requests to speak with Fadl in prison.)

There may be many inducements for Dr. Fadl's revisions, torture among them, but his smoldering resentment of Zawahiri's literary crimes was obviously a factor. Fadl claimed in *Al Hayat* that his differences with Zawahiri were "objective," not personal. "He was a burden to me on the educational, professional, jurisprudential, and sometimes personal levels," Fadl complained. "He was ungrateful for the kindness I had shown him and bit the hand that I had extended to him. What I got for my efforts was deception, betrayal, lies, and thuggery."

Usama Ayub, the Islamic Center director, told me that Fadl was questioning his thinking before his arrest in Yemen. Ayub called Fadl in late 2000 or early 2001 to inform him that he was preparing a nonviolent initiative of his own. "He encouraged me, although his security situation in Yemen did not allow him to discuss it," Ayub said, adding that he warned Fadl that many of his original ideas about jihad were being used to justify violence against women and innocent civilians. "I'm about to publish a book that clarifies all these ideas," Fadl told him. According to his son, Fadl "was not under any pressure to write the new book. He thought it could save the blood of Muslims."

The book's first segment appeared in the newspapers *Al Masri Al Youm* and *Al Jarida*, in November, 2007, on the tenth anniversary of the Luxor massacre. Titled "Rationalizing Jihad in Egypt and the World," it attempted to reconcile Fadl's well-known views with his sweeping modifications. Fadl claims that he wrote the book without any references, which makes his verbatim quotations of Islamic sources all the more impressive. A majority of the Al Jihad members in prison signed Fadl's manuscript—hoping, no doubt, to follow their Islamic Group colleagues out the prison door.

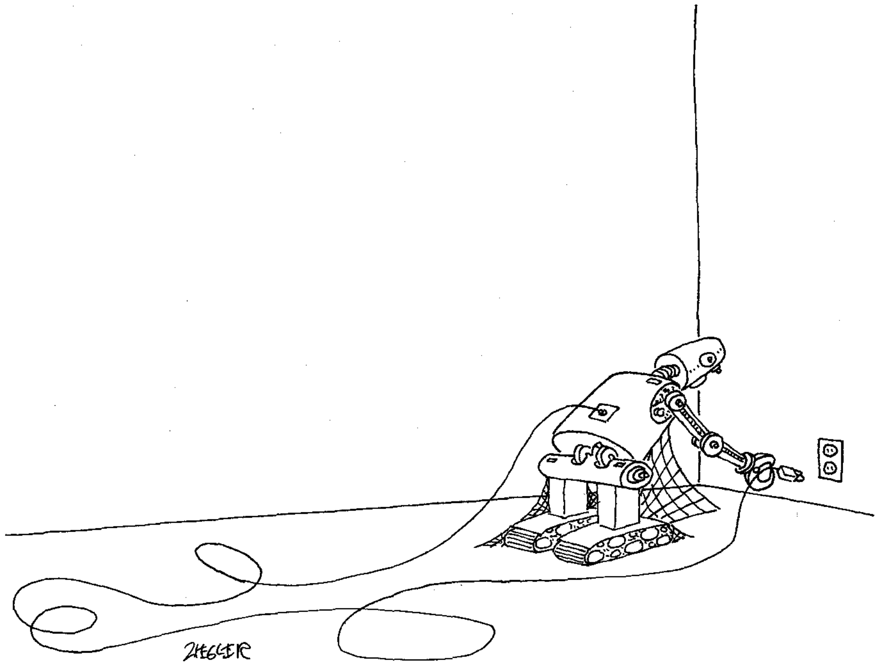
Hisham Kassem, a human-rights activist and a publisher in Cairo, told me that the newspapers that published Fadl's work "bought it from the Ministry of the Interior for a hundred and fifty thousand Egyptian pounds." The circumstances of the publication added to the general suspicion that the government had supervised the revisions, if not actually written them. Perhaps to counter that impression, Muhammad Salah, the Cairo bureau chief of *Al Hayat*, was allowed into Tora Prison to interview Fadl. In the resulting six-part series, Fadl defended the work as his own and left no doubt of his personal grudge against Zawahiri. Whatever the motivations behind the writing of the book, its publication amounted to a major assault on radical Islamist theology, from the man who had originally formulated much of that thinking.

The premise that opens "Rationalizing Jihad" is "There is nothing that invokes the anger of God and His wrath like the unwarranted spilling of blood and wrecking of property." Fadl then establishes a new set of rules for jihad, which essentially define most forms of terrorism as illegal under Islamic law and restrict the possibility of holy war to extremely rare circumstances. His argument may seem arcane, even to most Muslims, but to men who had risked their lives in order to carry out what they saw as the authentic precepts of their religion, every word assaulted their world view and brought into question their own chances for salvation.

In order to declare jihad, Fadl writes, certain requirements must be observed. One must have a place of refuge. There should be adequate financial resources to wage the campaign. Fadl castigates Muslims who resort to theft or kidnapping to finance jihad: "There is no such thing in Islam as ends justifying the means." Family members must be provided for. "There are those who strike and then escape, leaving their families, dependents, and other Muslims to suffer the consequences," Fadl points out. "This is in no way religion or jihad. It is not manliness." Finally, the enemy should be properly identified in order to prevent harm to innocents. "Those who have not followed these principles have committed the gravest of sins," Fadl writes.

To wage jihad, one must first gain permission from one's parents and creditors. The potential warrior also needs the blessing of a qualified imam or sheikh; he can't simply respond to the summons of a charismatic leader acting in the name of Islam. "Oh, you young people, do not be deceived by the heroes of the Internet, the leaders of the microphones, who are launching statements inciting the youth while living under the protection of intelligence services, or of a tribe, or in a distant cave or under political asylum in an infidel country," Fadl warns. "They have thrown many others before you into the infernos, graves, and prisons."

Even if a person is fit and capable,



jihad may not be required of him, Fadl says, pointing out that God also praises those who choose to isolate themselves from unbelievers rather than fight them. Nor is jihad required if the enemy is twice as powerful as the Muslims; in such an unequal contest, Fadl writes, "God permitted peace treaties and ceasefires with the infidels, either in exchange for money or without it—all of this in order to protect the Muslims, in contrast with those who push them into peril." In what sounds like a deliberate swipe at Zawahiri, he remarks, "Those who have triggered clashes and pressed their brothers into unequal military confrontations are specialists neither in fatwas nor in military affairs.... Just as those who practice medicine without background should provide compensation for the damage they have done, the same goes for those who issue fatwas without being qualified to do so."

Despite his previous call for jihad against unjust Muslim rulers, Fadl now says that such rulers can be fought only if they are unbelievers, and even then only to the extent that the battle will improve the situation of Muslims. Obviously, that has not been the case in Egypt or most other Islamic countries, where increased repression has been the usual result of armed insurgency. Fadl quotes the Prophet Muhammad advising Muslims to be patient with their flawed leaders: "Those who rebel against the Sultan shall die a pagan death."

Fadl repeatedly emphasizes that it is forbidden to kill civilians—including Christians and Jews—unless they are actively attacking Muslims. "There is nothing in the Sharia about killing Jews and the Nazarenes, referred to by some as the Crusaders," Fadl observes. "They are the neighbors of the Muslims . . . and being kind to one's neighbors is a religious duty." Indiscriminate bombing—"such as blowing up of hotels, buildings, and public transportation"—is not permitted, because innocents will surely die. "If vice is mixed with virtue, all becomes sinful," he writes. "There is no legal reason for harming people in any way." The prohibition against killing applies even to foreigners inside Muslim countries, since many of them may be Muslims. "You cannot decide who is a Muslim or who is an unbeliever or who should be killed based on the color of his skin or hair or the language he speaks or because he wears Western fashion," Fadl writes. "These are not proper indications for who is a Muslim and who is not." As for foreigners who are non-Muslims, they may have been invited into the country for work, which is a kind of treaty. What's more, there are many Muslims living in foreign lands considered inimical to Islam, and yet those Muslims are treated fairly; therefore, Muslims should reciprocate in their own countries. To Muslims living in non-Islamic countries, Fadl sternly writes, "I say it is not honorable to reside with people—even if they were nonbelievers and not part of a treaty, if they gave you permission to enter their homes and live with them, and if they gave you security for yourself and your money, and if they gave you the opportunity to work or study, or they granted you political asylum with a decent life and other acts of kindness—and then betray them, through killing and destruction. This was not in the manners and practices of the Prophet."

Fadl does not condemn all jihadist activity, however. "Jihad in Afghanistan will lead to the creation of an Islamic state with the triumph of the Taliban, God willing," he declares. The jihads in Iraq and Palestine are more problematic. As Fadl sees it, "If it were not for the jihad in Palestine, the Jews would have crept toward the neighboring countries a long time ago." Even so, he writes, "the Palestinian cause has, for some time, been a grape leaf used by the bankrupt leaders to cover their own faults." Speaking of Iraq, he notes that, without the jihad there, "America would have moved into Syria." However, it is unrealistic to believe that, "under current circumstances," such struggles will lead to Islamic states. Iraq is particularly troubling because of the sectarian cleansing that the war has generated. Fadl addresses the bloody division between Sunnis and Shiites at the heart of Islam: "Harming those who are affiliated with Islam but have a different creed is forbidden." Al Qaeda is an entirely Sunni organization; the Shiites are its declared enemies. Fadl, however, quotes Ibn Taymiyya, one of the revered scholars of early Islam, who is also bin Laden's favorite authority: "A Muslim's blood and money are safeguarded even if his creed is different."

Fadl approaches the question of *takfir* with caution, especially given his reputation for promoting this tendency in the past. He observes that there are various kinds of *takfir*, and that the matter is so complex that it must be left in the hands of competent Islamic jurists; members of the public are not allowed to enforce the law. "It is not permissible for a Muslim to condemn another Muslim," he writes, although he has been guilty of this on countless occasions. "He should renounce only the sin he commits."

Fadl acknowledges that "terrorizing the enemy is a legitimate duty"; however, he points out, "legitimate terror" has many constraints. Al Qaeda's terrorist attacks in America, London, and Madrid were wrong, because they were based on nationality, a form of indiscriminate slaughter forbidden by Islam. In his *Al Hayat* interview, Fadl labels 9/11 "a catastrophe for Muslims," because Al Qaeda's actions "caused the death of tens of thousands of Muslims—Arabs, Afghans, Pakistanis and others."

The most original argument in the book and the interview is Fadl's assertion that the hijackers of 9/11 "betrayed the enemy," because they had been given U.S. visas, which are a contract of protection. "The followers of bin Laden entered the United States with his knowledge, and on his orders double-crossed its population, killing and destroying," Fadl continues. "The Prophet—God's prayer and peace be upon him—said, 'On the Day of Judgment, every double-crosser will have a banner up his anus proportionate to his treachery.'"

At one point, Fadl observes, "People hate America, and the Islamist movements feel their hatred and their impotence. Ramming America has become the shortest road to fame and leadership among the Arabs and Muslims. But what good is it if you destroy one of your enemy's buildings, and he destroys one of your countries? What good is it if you kill one of his people, and he kills a thousand of yours?. . . That, in short, is my evaluation of 9/11."

ZAWAHIRI RESPONDS

Fadl's arguments undermined the entire intellectual framework of jihadist warfare. If the security services in Egypt, in tandem with the Al Azhar scholars, had undertaken to write a refutation of Al Qaeda's doctrine, it would likely have resembled the book that Dr. Fadl produced; and, indeed, that may have been exactly what occurred. And yet, with so many leaders of Al Jihad endorsing the book, it seemed clear that the organization itself was now dead. Terrorism in Egypt might continue in some form, but the violent factions were finished, departing amid public exclamations of repentance for the futility and sinfulness of their actions.

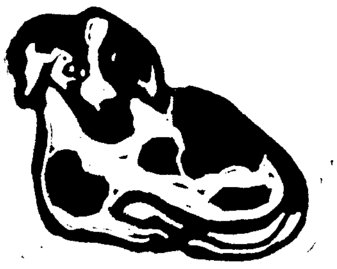
As the Muslim world awaited Zawahiri's inevitable response, the press and the clergy were surprisingly muted. One reason was that Fadl's revisions raised doubts about political activity that many Muslims do not regard as terror—for instance, the resistance movements, in Palestine and elsewhere, that oppose Israel and the presence of American troops in Muslim countries. "In this region, we must distinguish between violence against national governments and that of the resistance—in Iraq, in Lebanon, in Palestine," Essam el-Erian, of the Muslim Brotherhood, told me. "We cannot call this resistance 'violence.'" Nevertheless, such movements were inevitably drawn into the debate surrounding Fadl's book.

A number of Muslim clerics struggled to answer Dr. Fadl's broad critique of political bloodshed. Many had issued fatwas endorsing the very actions that Fadl now declared to be unjustified. Their responses were often surprising. For instance, Sheikh Hamid al-Ali, an influential Salafi cleric in Kuwait, whom the U.S. Treasury has described as an Al Qaeda facilitator and fund-raiser, declared on a Web site that he welcomed the rejection of violence as a means of fostering change in the Arab world. Sheikh Ali's fatwas have sometimes been linked to Al Qaeda actions. (Notoriously, months before 9/11, he authorized flying aircraft into targets during suicide operations.) He observed that although the Arab regimes have a natural self-interest in encouraging nonviolence, that shouldn't cause readers to spurn Fadl's argument. "I believe it is a big mistake to let this important intellectual transformation be nullified by political suspicion," Ali said. The decision of radical Islamist groups to adopt a peaceful path does not necessarily mean, however, that they can evolve into political parties. "We have to admit that we do not have in our land a true political process worthy of the name," Ali argued. "What we have are regimes that play a game in which they use whatever will guarantee their continued existence."

Meanwhile, Sheikh Abu Basir al-Tartusi, a Syrian Islamist living in London, railed against the "numbness and discouragement" of Fadl's message in telling Muslims that they are too weak to engage in jihad or overthrow their oppressive rulers. "More than half of the Koran and hundreds of the Prophet's sayings call for jihad and fighting those unjust tyrants," Tartusi exclaimed on a jihadist Web site. "What do you want us to do with his huge quantity of Sharia provisions, and how do you want us to understand and interpret them? Where is the benefit in deserting jihad against those tyrants? Because of them, the nation lost its religion, glory, honor, dignity, land, resources, and every precious thing!" Jihadist publications were filled with condemnations of Fadl's revisions. Hani el-Sibai, the Islamist attorney, is a Zawahiri loyalist who now runs a political Web site in London; he said of Fadl, "Do you think any Islamic group will listen to him? No. They are in the middle of a war."

Even so, the fact that Al Qaeda followers and sympathizers were paying so much attention to Fadl's manuscript made it imperative that Zawahiri offer a definitive refutation. Since Al Qaeda's violent ideology rested, in part, on Fadl's foundation, Zawahiri would have to find a way to discredit the author without destroying the authority of his own organization. It was a tricky task.

Zawahiri's main problem in countering Fadl was his own lack of standing as a religious scholar. "Al Qaeda has no one who is qualified from a Sharia perspective to make a response," Fadl boasted to *Al Hayat*. "All of them—bin Laden, Zawahiri, and others—are not religious scholars on whose opinion you can count. They are ordinary persons." Of course, Fadl himself had no formal religious training, either.



In February of this year, Zawahiri announced in a video that he had finished a "letter" responding to Fadl's book. "The Islam presented by that document is the one that America and the West wants and is pleased with: an Islam without jihad," Zawahiri said. "Because I consider this document to be an insult to the Muslim nation, I chose for the rebuttal the name 'The Exoneration,' in order to express the nation's innocence of this insult." This announcement, by itself, was unprecedented. "It's the first time in history that bin Laden and Zawahiri have responded in this way to internal dissent," Diaa Rashwan, an analyst for the Al Ahram Centre for Political and Strategic Studies, in Cairo, told me.

The "letter," which finally appeared on the Internet in March, was nearly two hundred pages long. "This message I present to the reader today is among the most difficult I have ever written in my life," Zawahiri admits in his introduction. Although the text is laden with footnotes and lengthy citations from Islamic scholars, Zawahiri's strategy is apparent from the beginning. Whereas Fadl's book is a trenchant attack on the immoral roots of Al Qaeda's theology, Zawahiri navigates his argument toward the familiar shores of the "Zionist-Crusader" conspiracy. Zawahiri claims that Fadl wrote his book "in the spirit of the Minister of the Interior." He characterizes it as a desperate attempt by the enemies of Islam—America, the West, Jews, the apostate rulers of the Muslim world—to "stand in the way of the fierce wave of jihadi revivalism that is shaking the Islamic world." Mistakes have been made, he concedes. "I neither condone the killing of innocent people nor claim that jihad is free of error," he writes. "Muslim leaders during the time of the Prophet made mistakes, but the jihad did not stop. . . . I'm warning those Islamist groups who welcome the document that they are giving the government the knife with which it can slaughter them."

In presenting Al Qaeda's defense, Zawahiri clearly displays the moral relativism that has taken over the organization. "Keep in mind that we have the right to do to the infidels what they have done to us," he writes. "We bomb them as they bomb us, even if we kill someone

"Then we're agreed—it's a great day for a ballgame."

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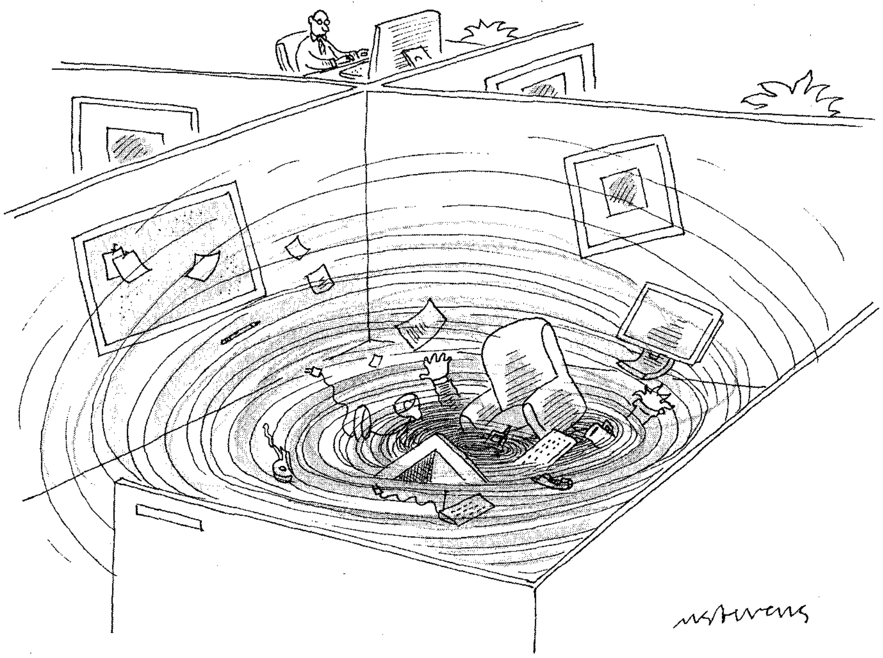
who is not permitted to be killed." He compares 9/11 to the 1998 American bombing of a pharmaceutical plant in Sudan, in retaliation for Al Qaeda's destruction of two American embassies in East Africa. (The U.S. mistakenly believed that the plant was producing chemical weapons.) "I see no difference between the two operations, except that the money used to build the factory was Muslim money and the workers who died in the factory's rubble"—actually, a single night watchman—"were Muslims, while the money that was spent on the buildings that those hijackers destroyed was infidel money and the people who died in the explosion were infidels." When Zawahiri questions the sanctity of a visa, which Fadl equates with a mutual contract of safe passage, he consults an English dictionary and finds in the definition of "visa" no mention of a guarantee of protection. "Even if the contract is based on international agreements, we are not bound by these agreements," Zawahiri claims, citing two radical clerics who support his view. In any case, America doesn't feel bound to protect Muslims; for instance, it is torturing people in its military prisons in Guantánamo Bay, Cuba. "The U.S. gives itself the right to take any Muslim without respect to his visa," Zawahiri writes. "If the U.S. and Westerners don't respect visas, why should we?"

Zawahiri clumsily dodges many of the most penetrating of Fadl's arguments. "The writer speaks of violations of the Sharia, such as killing people because of their nationality, skin color, hair color, or denomination," he complains in a characteristic passage. "This is another example of making accusations without evidence. No one ever talked about killing people because of their skin color or hair color. I demand the writer produce specific incidents with specific dates."

Zawahiri makes some telling psychological points; for instance, he says that the imprisoned Fadl is projecting his own weakness on the mujahideen, who have grown stronger since Fadl deserted them, fifteen years earlier. "The Islamic mujahid movement was not defeated, by the grace of God; indeed, because of its patience, steadfastness, and thoughtfulness, it is headed toward victory," he writes. He cites the strikes on 9/11 and the ongoing battles in Iraq, Afghanistan, and Somalia, which he says are wearing America down.

To dispute Fadl's assertion that Muslims living in non-Islamic countries are treated fairly, Zawahiri points out that in some Western countries Muslim girls are forbidden to wear *hijab* to school. Muslim men are prevented from marrying more than one wife, and from beating their wives, as allowed by some interpretations of Sharia. Muslims are barred from donating money to certain Islamic causes, although money is freely and openly raised for Israel. He cites the 2005 cartoon controversy in Denmark and the celebrity of the author Salman Rushdie as examples of Western countries exalting those who denigrate Islam. He says that some Western laws prohibiting anti-Semitic remarks would forbid Muslims to recite certain passages in the Koran



THE BERMUDA CUBICLE

dealing with the treachery of the Jews.

Writing about the treatment of tourists, Zawahiri says, “The mujahideen don’t kidnap people randomly”—they kidnap or harm tourists to send a message to their home countries. “We don’t attack Brazilian tourists in Finland, or those from Vietnam in Venezuela,” he writes. No doubt, Muslims may be killed occasionally, but if that happens it’s a pardonable mistake. “The majority of scholars say that it is permissible to strike at infidels, even if Muslims are among them,” Zawahiri contends. He cites a well-known verse in the Koran to support, among other things, the practice of kidnapping: “When the sacred months are drawn away, slay the idolators wherever you find them, and take them, and confine them, and lie in wait for them at every place of ambush.”

As for 9/11, Zawahiri writes, “The mujahideen didn’t attack the West in its home country with suicide attacks in order to break treaties, or out of a desire to spill blood, or because they were half-mad, or because they suffer from frustration and failure, as many imagine. They attacked it because they were forced to defend their community and their sacred religion from centuries of aggression. They had no means other than suicide attacks to defend themselves.”

Zawahiri’s argument demonstrates why Islam is so vulnerable to radicalization. It is a religion that was born in conflict, and in its long history it has developed a reservoir of opinions and precedents that are supposed to govern the behavior of Muslims toward their enemies. Some of Zawahiri’s commentary may seem comically academic, as in this citation in support of the need for Muslims to prepare for jihad: “Imam Ahmad said: ‘We heard from Harun bin Ma’ruf, citing Abu Wahab, who quoted Amru bin al-Harith citing Abu Ali Tamamah bin Shafi that he heard Uqbah bin Amir saying, “I heard the Prophet say from the pulpit: ‘Against them make ready your strength.’ ” ’Strength refers to shooting arrows and other projectiles from instruments of war.” And yet such proofs of the rightfulness of jihad, or taking captives, or slaughtering the enemy are easily found in the commentaries of scholars, the rulings of Sharia courts, the volumes of the Prophet’s sayings, and the Koran itself. Sheikh Ali Gomaa, the Egyptian Grand Mufti, has pointed out that literalism is often the prelude to extremism. “We must not oversimplify,” he told me. Crude interpretations of Islamic texts can lead men like Zawahiri to conclude that murder should be celebrated. They come to believe that religion is science. They see their actions as logical, righteous, and mandatory. In this fashion, a surgeon is transformed from a healer into a killer, but only if the candle of individual conscience has been extinguished.

ON THE DEFENSIVE

Several times in his lengthy response, Zawahiri complains of double standards when critics attack Al Qaeda’s tactics but ignore similar actions on the part of Palestinian organizations. He notes that Fadl ridicules the fighting within Al Qaeda. “Why don’t you ask Hamas the same thing?” Zawahiri demands. “Isn’t this a clear contradiction?” At another point, Zawahiri concedes the failure of Al Jihad to overthrow the Egyptian government, then adds, “Neither has the eighty-year-old jihad kicked the occupier out of Palestine. If it is said that the jihad in Egypt put a halt to tourism and harmed the economy, the answer is that jihad in Palestine resulted in the siege of Gaza.” He goes on to point out that Palestinian missiles also indiscriminately kill children and the elderly, even Arabs, but no one holds the Palestinians to the same ethical standards as Al Qaeda.

Zawahiri knows that Palestine is a confounding issue for many Muslims. “The situation in Palestine will always be an exception,” Gamal Sultan, the Islamist writer in Cairo, told me. Essam el-Erian, of the Muslim Brotherhood, said, “Here in Egypt, you will find that the entire population supports Hamas and Hezbollah, although no one endorses the Islamic Group.” Recently, however, the embargo in the Arab press on any criticism of terrorist acts by the Palestinian resistance movement has been breached by several searching articles that directly address the futility of violence. “The whole point of resistance in Palestine and Lebanon is to accomplish independence, but we should ask ourselves if we are achieving that goal,” Marzouq al-Halabi, a Palestinian writer, wrote in *Al Hayat* in January. “We should not just say, ‘Oh, every resistance has its mistakes, there are victims by accident.’ . . . Violence has become the beginning and the end of all action. How else would you explain Hamas militants throwing Fatah leaders off the roofs of buildings?” The resistance is destroying the potential of society to ever recover, the writer argues. Unfortunately, this reconsideration of violence appears at a time when despair and revolutionary fervor are boiling over in Palestine. In March of this year, a poll found that, among Palestinians, support for violence was greater than at any time in the past fifteen years, and that a majority opposed continuing peace negotiations.

Zawahiri has watched Al Qaeda's popularity decline in places where it formerly enjoyed great support. In Pakistan, where hundreds have been killed recently by Al Qaeda suicide bombers—including, perhaps, former Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto—public opinion has turned against bin Laden and his companions. An Algerian terror organization, the Salafist Group for Preaching and Combat, formally affiliated itself with Al Qaeda in September, 2006, and began a series of suicide bombings that have alienated the Algerian people, long weary of the horrors that Islamist radicals have inflicted on their country. Even members of Al Qaeda admit that their cause has been harmed by indiscriminate violence. In February of this year, Abu Turab al-Jazairi, an Al Qaeda commander in northern Iraq, whose nom de guerre suggests that he is Algerian, gave an interview to *Al Arab,* a Qatari daily. "The attacks in Algeria sparked animated debate here in Iraq," he said. "By God, had they told me they were planning to harm the Algerian President and his family, I would say, 'Blessings be upon them!' But explosions in the street, blood knee-deep, the killing of soldiers whose wages are not even enough for them to eat at third-rate restaurants . . . and calling this jihad? By God, it's sheer idiocy!" Abu Turab admitted that he and his colleagues were suffering a similar public-relations problem in Iraq, because "Al Qaeda has been infiltrated by people who have harmed its reputation." He said that only about a third of the nine thousand fighters who call themselves members of Al Qaeda in Mesopotamia can be relied upon. "The rest are unreliable, since they keep harming the good name of Al Qaeda." He concludes, "Our position is very difficult."

In Saudi Arabia, where the government has been trying to tame its radical clerics, Sheikh Abdul Aziz bin Abdullah Aal al-Sheikh, the Grand Mufti, issued a fatwa in October, 2007, forbidding Saudi youth to join the jihad outside the country. Two months later, Saudi authorities arrested members of a suspected Al Qaeda cell who allegedly planned to assassinate the Grand Mufti. That same fall, Sheikh Salman al-Oadah, a cleric whom bin Laden has praised in the past, appeared on an Arabic television network and read an open letter to the Al Qaeda leader. He asked, "Brother Osama, how much blood has been spilled? How many innocent children, women, and old people have been killed, maimed, and expelled from their homes in the name of Al Qaeda?" These critiques echoed some of the concerns of the Palestinian cleric Sheikh Abu Muhammad al-Maqdisi, who is considered by some to be the most influential jihadi theorist. In 2004, Maqdisi, then in a Jordanian prison, castigated his former protégé Abu Musab al-Zarqawi, the now dead leader of Al Qaeda in Iraq, for his unproductive violence, particularly the wholesale slaughter of Shiites and the use of suicide bombers. "Mujahideen should refrain from acts that target civilians, churches, or other places of worship, including Shiite sites," Maqdisi wrote. "The hands of the jihad warriors must remain clean."

In December, in order to stanch the flow of criticism, Zawahiri boldly initiated a virtual town-hall meeting, soliciting questions in an online forum. This spring, he released two lengthy audio responses to nearly a hundred of the nine hundred often testy queries that were posed. The first one came from a man who identified himself sardonically as the Geography Teacher. "Excuse me, Mr. Zawahiri, but who is it who is killing, with Your Excellency's permission, the innocents in Baghdad, Morocco, and Algeria? Do you consider the killing of women and children to be jihad?" Then he demanded, "Why have you not—to this day—carried out any strike in Israel? Or is it easier to kill Muslims in the markets? Maybe you should study geography, because your maps show only the Muslim states." Zawahiri protested that Al Qaeda had not killed innocents. "In fact, we fight those who kill innocents. Those who kill innocents are the Americans, the

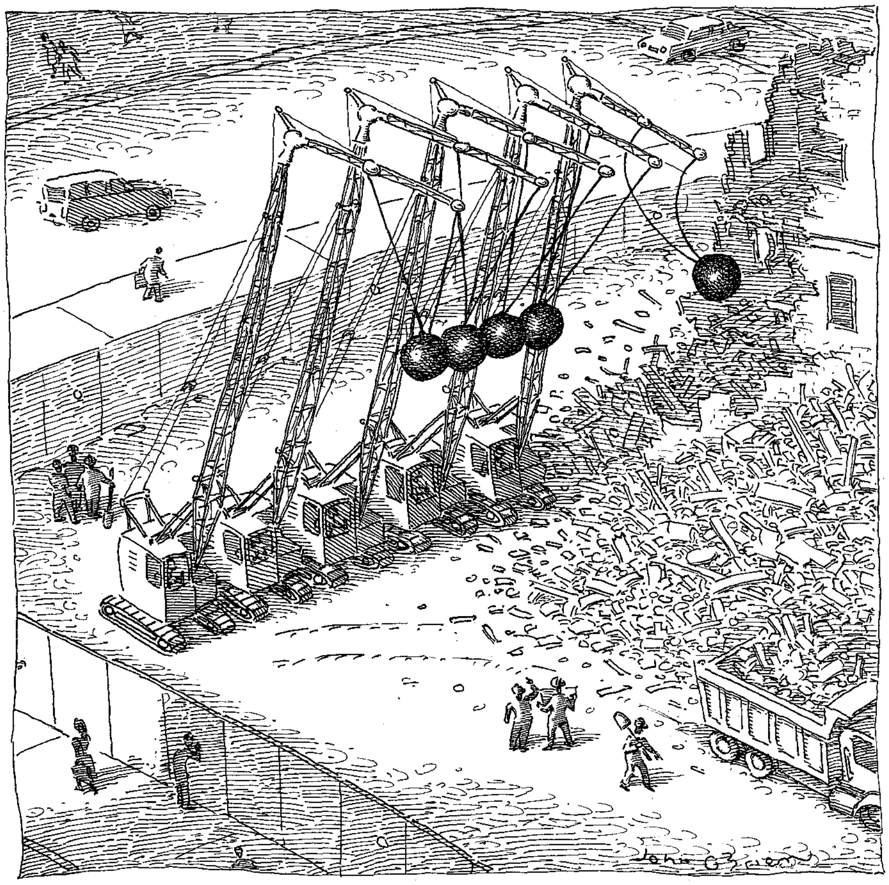
"I wish our marriage had a restore point."

Jews, the Russians, and the French and their agents.” As for Al Qaeda’s failure to attack Israel, despite bin Laden’s constant exploitation of the issue, Zawahiri asks, “Why does the questioner focus on how Al Qaeda in particular must strike Israel, while he didn’t request that jihadist organizations in Palestine come to the aid of their brothers in Chechnya, Afghanistan, and Iraq?”

The murder of innocents emerged as the most prominent issue in the exchanges. An Algerian university student sarcastically congratulated Zawahiri for killing sixty Muslims in Algeria on a holy feast day. What was their sin? the student wanted to know. “Those who were killed on the eleventh of December in Algeria are not from the innocents,” Zawahiri claimed. “They are from the Crusader unbelievers and the government troops who defend them. Our brothers in Al Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb”—North Africa—“are more truthful, more just, and more righteous than the lying sons of France.” A Saudi wondered how Muslims could justify supporting Al Qaeda, given its long history of indiscriminate murder. “Are there other ways and means in which the objectives of jihad can be achieved without killing people?” he asked. “Please do not use as a pretext what the Americans or others are doing. Muslims are supposed to be an example to the world in tolerance and lofty goals, not to become a gang whose only concern is revenge.” But Zawahiri was unable to rise to the questioner’s ethical challenge. He replied, “If a criminal were to storm into your house, attack your family and kill them, steal your property, and burn down your house, then turns to attack the homes of your neighbors, will you treat him tolerantly so that you will not become a gang whose only concern is revenge?”

Zawahiri even had to defend himself for helping to spread the myth that the Israelis carried out the attacks of 9/11. He placed the blame for this rumor on Hezbollah, the Lebanese Shiite organization, which aired the notion on its television station, Al Manar. Zawahiri said indignantly, “The objective behind this lie is to deny that the Sunnis have heroes who harm America as no one has harmed it throughout its history.”

Many of the questions dealt with Fadl, beginning with why Zawahiri had altered without permission Fadl’s encyclopedia of jihadist philosophy, “The Compendium of the Pursuit of Divine Knowledge.” Zawahiri claimed that the writing of the book was a joint effort, because Al Jihad had financed it. He had to edit the book because it was full of theological errors. “We neither forged anything nor meddled with anything,” Zawahiri said. Later, he added, “I ask those who are firm in their covenant not to pay attention to this propaganda war that the United States is launching in its prisons, which are situated in our countries.” Fadl’s revisions, Zawahiri warned, “place restrictions on jihadist action which, if implemented, would destroy jihad completely.”



IS AL QAEDA FINISHED?

It is, of course, unlikely that Al Qaeda will voluntarily follow the example of the Islamist Group and Zawahiri’s own organization, Al Jihad, and revise its violent strategy. But it is clear that radical Islam is confronting a rebellion within its ranks, one that Zawahiri and the leaders of Al Qaeda are poorly equipped to respond to. Radical Islam began as a spiritual call to the Muslim world to unify and strengthen itself through holy warfare. For the dreamers who long to institute God’s justice on earth, Fadl’s revisions represent a substantial moral challenge. But for the young nihilists who are joining the Al Qaeda movement for their own reasons—revenge, boredom, or a desire for adventure—the quarrels of the philosophers will have little meaning.

According to a recent National Intelligence Estimate, Al Qaeda has been regenerating, and remains the greatest terror threat to America. Bruce Hoffman, a professor of security studies at Georgetown University, says that although Fadl’s denunciation has weakened Al Qaeda’s intellectual standing, “from the worm’s-eye view Al Qaeda fighters have on the border of Pakistan and Afghanistan, things are going more their way than they have in a long time.” He went on, “The Pakistani government is more accommodating. The number of suicide bombers in both countries is way up, which indicates a steady supply of fighters. Even in Iraq, the flow is slower but continues.”

"I can cure your back problem, but there's a risk that you'll be left with nothing to talk about."

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Still, the core of Al Qaeda is much reduced from what it was before 9/11. An Egyptian intelligence official told me that the current membership totals less than two hundred men; American intelligence estimates range from under three hundred to more than five hundred. Meanwhile, new Al Qaeda-inspired groups, which may be only tangentially connected to the leaders, have spread, and older, more established terrorist organizations are now flying the Al Qaeda banner, outside the control of bin Laden and Zawahiri. Hoffman thinks this is the reason that bin Laden and Zawahiri have been emphasizing Israel and Palestine in their latest statements. "I see the pressure building on Al Qaeda to do something enormous this year," Hoffman said. "The biggest damage that Dr. Fadl has done to Al Qaeda is to bring into question its relevance."

This August, Al Qaeda will mark its twentieth anniversary. That is a long life for a terrorist group. Most terror organizations disappear with the death of their charismatic leader, and it would be hard to imagine Al Qaeda remaining a coherent entity without Osama bin Laden. The Red Army Faction went out of business when the Berlin Wall came down and it lost its sanctuary in East Germany. The Irish Republican Army, unusually, endured for nearly a century, until economic conditions in Ireland significantly improved, and the leaders were pressured by their own members to reach a political accommodation. When one looks for hopeful parallels for the end of Al Qaeda, it is discouraging to realize that its leadership is intact, its sanctuaries are unthreatened, and the social conditions that gave rise to the movement are largely unchanged. On the other hand, Al Qaeda has nothing to show for its efforts except blood and grief. The organization was constructed from rotten intellectual bits and pieces—false readings of religion and history—cleverly and deviously fitted together to give the appearance of reason. Even if Fadl's rhetoric strikes some readers as questionable, Al Qaeda's sophistry is rudely displayed for everyone to see. Although it will likely continue as a terrorist group, who could still take it seriously as a philosophy?

One afternoon in Egypt, I visited Kamal Habib, a key leader of the first generation of Al Jihad, who is now a political scientist and analyst. His writing has gained him an audience of former radicals who, like him, have sought a path back to moderation. We met in the cafeteria of the Journalists' Syndicate, in downtown Cairo. Habib is an energetic political theorist, unbroken by ten years in prison, despite having been tortured. (His arms are marked with scars from cigarette burns.) "We now have before us two schools of thought," Habib told me. "The old school, which was expressed by Al Jihad and its spinoff, Al Qaeda, is the one that was led by Ayman al-Zawahiri, Sheikh Maqdisi, Zarqawi. The new school, which Dr. Fadl has given expression to, represents a battle of faith. It's deeper than just ideology." He went on, "The general mood of Islamist movements in the seventies was intransigence. Now the general mood is toward harmony and coexistence. The distance between the two is a measure of their experience." Ironically, Dr. Fadl's thinking gave birth to both schools. "As long as a person lives in a world of jihad, the old vision will control his thinking," Habib suggested. "When he's in battle, he doesn't wonder if he's wrong or he's right. When he's arrested, he has time to wonder."

"Dr. Fadl's revisions and Zawahiri's response show that the movement is disintegrating," Karam Zuhdy, the Islamic Group leader, told me one afternoon, in his modest apartment in Alexandria. He is a striking figure, fifty-six years old, with blond hair and black eyebrows. His daughter, who is four, wrapped herself around his leg as an old black-and-white Egyptian movie played silently on a television. Such movies provide a glimpse of a more tolerant and hopeful time, before Egypt took its dark turn into revolution and Islamist violence. I asked Zuhdy how his country might have been different if he and his colleagues had never chosen the bloody path. "It would have been a lot better now," he admitted. "Our opting for violence encouraged Al Jihad to emerge." He even suggested that, had the Islamists not murdered Sadat thirty years ago, there would be peace today between the Palestinians and the Israelis. He quoted the Prophet Muhammad: "Only what benefits people stays on the earth."

"It's very easy to start violence," Zuhdy said. "Peace is much more difficult." ♦

THE POLITICAL SCENE

THE DIRTY TRICKSTER

Campaign tips from the man who has done it all.

BY JEFFREY TOOBIN

A sign inside the front door of Miami Velvet, a night club of sorts in a warehouse-style building a few minutes from the airport, states, "If sexual activity offends you in any way, do not enter the premises." At first glance, though, the scene inside looks like a nineteen-eighties disco, with a bar, Madonna at high volume, flashing lights, a stripper's pole, and a dancer's cage. But a flat-screen television on the wall plays porn videos, and many clubgoers disappear into locker rooms and emerge wearing towels. From there, some of them go into a lounge, a Jacuzzi room, or one of about half a dozen private rooms to have sex—with their dates or with new acquaintances. Miami Velvet is the leading "swingers' club" in Miami, and Roger Stone took me there to explain the role he may have played in the fall of Eliot Spitzer, the former governor of New York.

For nearly forty years, Stone has hovered around Republican and national politics, both near the center and at the periphery. At times, mostly during the Reagan years, he was a political consultant and lobbyist who, in conventional terms, was highly successful, working for such politicians as Bob Dole and Tom Kean. Even then, though, Stone regularly crossed the line between respectability and ignominy, and he has become better known for leading a colorful personal life than for landing big-time clients. Still, it is no coincidence that Stone materialized in the midst of the Spitzer scandal—and that he had memorable cameos in the last two Presidential elections. While the Republican Party usually claims Ronald Reagan as its inspiration, Stone represents the less discussed but still vigorous legacy of Richard Nixon, whose politics reflected a curious admixture of anti-Communism, social moderation, and tactical thuggery. Stone believes that Nixonian hardball, more than sunny Reaganism, is John McCain's only hope for the Presidency.

Over the years, Stone's relationships with colleagues and clients have been so combustible that his value as a messenger has been compromised. Stone worked for Donald Trump as an occasional lobbyist and as an adviser when Trump considered running for President in 2000. "Roger is a stone-cold loser," Trump told me. "He always tries taking credit for things he never did." Like Nixon, Stone is also a great hater—of, among others, the Clintons, Karl Rove, and Spitzer. So what happened at Miami Velvet one night last September, he said, amounted to a gift.

"She was sitting right over there," Stone told me, pointing to a seat at the bar, as we sipped vodka from plastic cups. (Miami Velvet is B.Y.O.B., to avoid the trouble of securing a liquor license, so Stone had brought along a bottle of the brand p.i.n.k.) "We were just having a casual conversation, and I told her I was a dentist," Stone said. "She told me she was a call girl, but she wasn't working that night." Miami Velvet prohibits prostitution on the premises, a point that is emphasized in the four-page single-spaced legal waiver that every one must sign to be admitted. (Another house rule, which is reinforced by signs on the wall, is "No means no.") "She told me she had a very high-end clientele—she kept using the word 'high-end'—athletes, international businessmen, politicians," Stone said.

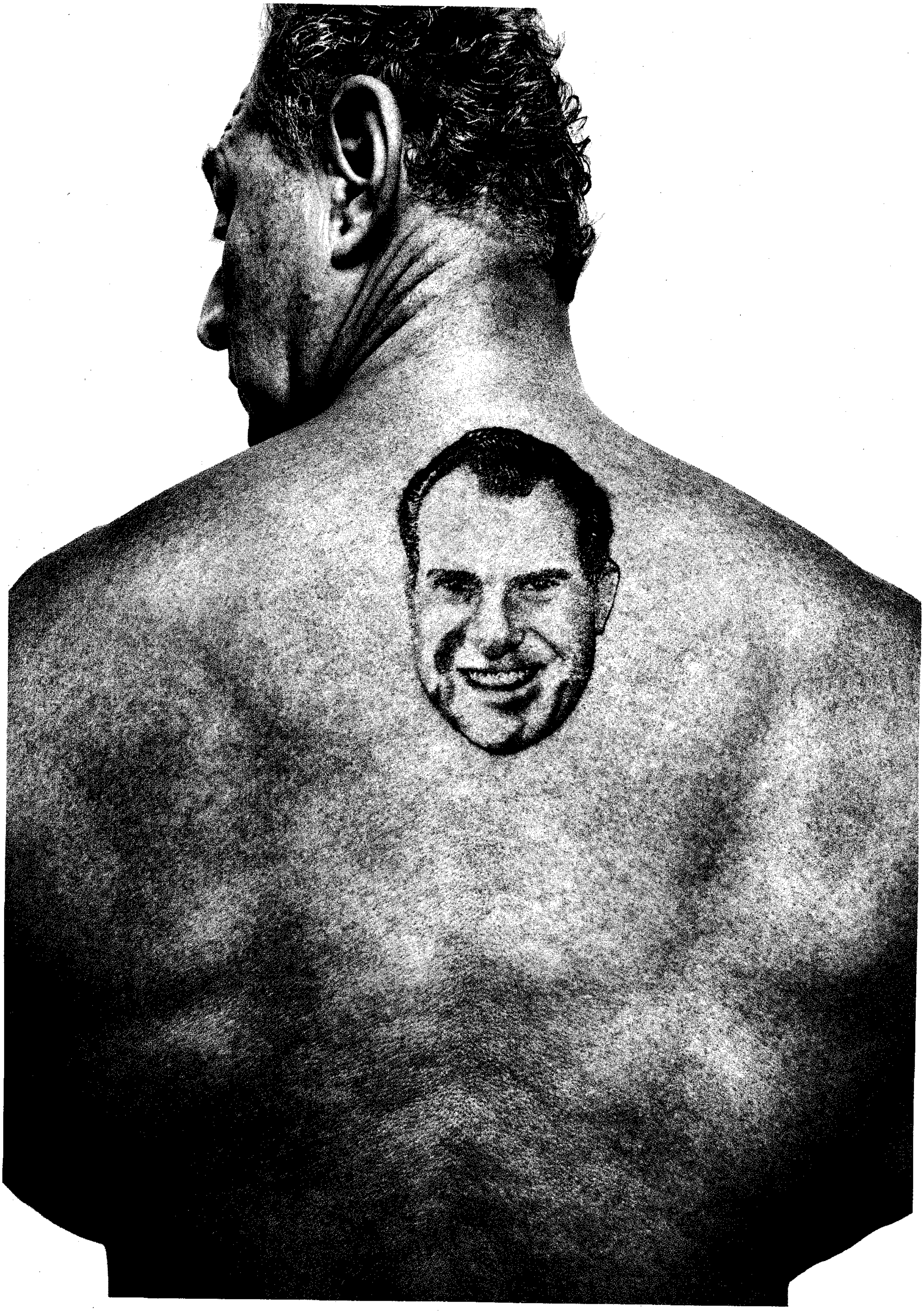
" 'Like who?' I asked her," Stone went on. "She named a couple of sports guys, some car dealers I'd heard of because of their commercials, and then she said, 'I almost had a date with Eliot Spitzer, the governor of New Jersey.' " Stone laughed. "She didn't know much about politics. So I asked her, 'Did this guy have a beard?' " (Jon Corzine, the governor of New Jersey, has a beard.) No, the woman said, he was a skinny bald guy—a description that fit Spitzer. According to Stone, the woman told him that Spitzer had reached her through her escort service, which listed her as a brunette, but she had dyed her hair blond. So the agency referred the governor to a dark-haired colleague, the woman said, who met up with Spitzer in Miami.

"I asked her what her friend said about Spitzer," Stone told me. "She said he was nice enough, but the only odd thing was that he kept his socks on. They were the kind that went to the middle of the calf, and one of them kept falling down."

Stone said that he decided, after hearing the story, to keep the conversation with the woman to himself for the moment. But there was never any doubt that he would eventually deploy it. As Stone puts it in one of the many rules he lives by, "He who speaks first, loses."

Stone spends most of his time in Miami these days, but he's still greeted warmly by the staff at the "21" Club, the venerable former speakeasy on West Fifty-second Street. "I love it here," Stone said, as we settled into a corner table. "It's like time stopped in about 1975 in here—my kind of place." What appeals to Stone is not just the red-meat-and-red-wine gastronomy but also the jackets-required formality. Stone has had his suits tailor-made since the nineteen-seventies, partly because he has a body-builder's physique, which makes it difficult to buy clothes off the rack, but also because he is fastidious about what he wears. He owns more than a hundred suits. For many years, he bleached his hair to an almost fluorescent yellow, but he now keeps it a more banal brown. For dinner, he wore a chalk-striped double-

Roger Stone has worked with Richard Nixon and Lee Atwater, and on the Florida recount. Photographs by Platon.



breasted suit, a starched white shirt with a spread collar, and a silver-colored tie, and, outside the restaurant, a homburg. His outfit comported with two of the rules in his book, "Stone's Rules for War, Politics, Food, Fashion, and Living," which he hopes to publish soon: "Never wear a double-breasted suit and a button-down collar" and "White dress shirts after six."

Stone ordered a Stolichnaya Martini. "The key to a good Martini is you have to marinate the olives in vermouth first," he said. "Nixon gave me the recipe. He said he got it from Winston Churchill."

Stone did not grow up in such rarefied company. He was born in 1952, half Italian and half Hungarian, and was raised in Lewisboro, New York. His mother wrote for the local newspaper, and his father dug wells. Before he was a teen-ager, a neighbor gave him a copy of Barry Goldwater's book "The Conscience of a Conservative," and Stone was hooked. In 1965, when he was thirteen, Stone was taking the train into New York to work weekends on behalf of the ill-fated mayoral campaign of William F. Buckley, Jr. "The key thing about Lewisboro is that it is just across the border from New Canaan," Stone said, referring to the wealthy Connecticut suburb. "So early on I saw myself as living in kind of a bridge between two cultures, the white working class and the white upper class." In Stone's political world view, both groups are, or ought to be, united in opposition to the meddling hand of government.

Stone moved to Washington to attend George Washington University, but he became so engrossed in Republican politics that he never graduated. He was just nineteen when he played a bit part in the Watergate scandals. He adopted the pseudonym Jason Rainier and made contributions in the name of the Young Socialist Alliance to the campaign of Pete McCloskey, who was challenging Nixon for the Republican nomination in 1972. Stone then sent a receipt to the Manchester *Union Leader*, to "prove" that Nixon's adversary was a left-wing stooge. Stone hired another Republican operative, who was given the pseudonym Sedan Chair II, to infiltrate the McGovern campaign. Stone's Watergate high jinks were revealed during congressional hearings in 1973, and the news cost Stone his job on the staff of Senator Robert Dole. Stone then moved into the world of political consulting, to which he was temperamentally better suited than government service. He co-founded the National Conservative Political Action Committee, which spent money in support of candidates, including Chuck Grassley, of Iowa, and Dan Quayle, in Indiana, who were instrumental in the G.O.P. takeover of the Senate.

Stone revels in his Watergate pedigree, noting almost apologetically that he was never accused of breaking any law. "The Democrats were weak, we were strong," he told me. (Stone's rules: "Attack, attack, attack—never defend" and "Admit nothing, deny everything, launch counterattack.") In Nixon's later years, Stone organized a series of dinners at the former President's home in New Jersey, where groups of journalists would listen to the great man's monologues about world events. "Of course a lot of the journalists hated Nixon, but they were always blown away by how smart he was," Stone said.

It was Stone's preoccupation with toughness that led to his enduring affection for Nixon. "The reason I'm a Nixonite is because of his indestructibility and resilience," Stone said. "He never quit. His whole career was all built around his personal resentment of élitism. It was the poor-me syndrome. John F. Kennedy's father bought him his House seat, his Senate seat, and the Presidency. No one bought Nixon anything. Nixon resented that. He was very class-conscious. He identified with the people who ate TV dinners, watched Lawrence Welk, and loved their country." (Rule: "When I hear the word 'culture,' I reach for my revolver.")

Although Stone shares many of Nixon's resentments, his own tastes have always tended to more Rabelaisian pleasures than "champagne music" and Salisbury steak. Not long ago, Stone went to the Ink Monkey tattoo shop in Venice Beach and had a portrait of Nixon's face applied to his back, right below the neck. "Women love it," Stone said.

Nixon recognized the effectiveness of anti-élitism—a staple of American campaigns even today—as a core message. "Everybody talks about the Reagan Democrats who helped put the Republican Party over the top, but they were really the Nixon Democrats. The exodus of working-class people from the Democratic Party was started by Nixon. The realignment was delayed by Watergate, but it was really Nixon who figured out how to win," Stone said. "We had a non-élitist message. We were the party of the workingman! We wanted lower taxes for everyone, across the board. They were the party of the Hollywood élite." Stone went on, "The point that the Democrats missed was that the people who weren't rich wanted to be rich. And Jimmy Carter was viewed as an appeaser." (Rule: "The Democrats are the party of slavery; the Republicans are the party of freedom.")

Hank Sheinkopf, the veteran Democratic political consultant, who has known Stone for many years, values his political insights. "He was able to use the Democratic teachings on voter turnout and class warfare and turn it against us," Sheinkopf told me. "He knew what populism was in reverse. He thought like a Democrat and dressed like a plutocrat. He once said to me, 'Are you black? Are you Hispanic? Are you gay?' When I said no, he said, 'Then why the fuck are you a Democrat? You should be with us.' "

Stone detests Hillary Clinton's politics but admires her pugnacity. He wrote recently on his Web site, an erratically updated collection of observations called Stonezone.com, "I must admit she has demonstrated true grit and Nixonian-like tenacity in the face of adversity." Stone particularly admires Clinton's attempt to hang the "élitist" tag on Barack Obama. "It's a good idea," he said.

In 1976, Stone was named national youth director for Reagan's first, failed run for the Republican nomination. Four years later, after serving on various young-Republican task forces, Stone asked the leaders of Reagan's next campaign for the toughest assignment they had. They made Stone, who was in his late twenties, political director of New York, New Jersey, and Connecticut. The region hardly looked like Reagan country, but Stone found a new mentor to help him. "I was invited to a party by a

Stone believes that Nixonian hardball, more than sunny Reaganism, is John McCain's only hope for the Presidency.

"The drug has, however, proved more effective than traditional psychoanalysis."

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socialite named Sheila Mosler, and Roy Cohn was there," Stone said, as the captain delivered an order of "21" 's steak tartare. "Roy was a Democrat, but he was an anti-Communist and a master of public relations, and he wanted to help me with Reagan. He told me to come see him at his town house.

"When I got there, Roy was in his bathrobe, eating three strips of bacon burned to a crisp and both halves of a devilled egg," Stone went on. "He started telling me how he was going to help me set up the Reagan campaign—everything from union endorsements to office space. He told me to ride down to the courthouse with him. He had a young lawyer with him, and it was clear that Roy knew nothing about the case he was going to argue. But he knew it didn't matter. He used to say, 'Don't tell me the law. Tell me the judge.' Roy knew how the world worked." Following Cohn's lead, Stone played hardball for Reagan, challenging George H. W. Bush's New York primary delegates on a variety of technical grounds, getting many of them disqualified. A couple of years later, Cohn threw Stone a thirtieth-birthday party in a private room at "21."

Like Stone, Cohn combined conservative politics with an outré personal life. "Roy was not gay," Stone told me. "He was a man who liked having sex with men. Gays were weak, effeminate. He always seemed to have these young blond boys around. It just wasn't discussed. He was interested in power and access. He told me his absolute goal was to die completely broke and owing millions to the I.R.S. He succeeded in that." Cohn was a role model for Stone. "I'm a total Republican, but I've never claimed to be a Christian-right conservative. They're a large but dwindling part of the Party. We need to get suburban moderates back. Fiscal conservatives and social moderates have been drummed out of the Party. Fiscal conservatives are the glue that holds the Party together. Social issues, unfortunately, do nothing but put voters out of reach for us." (Rule: "Folks want to get government out of the boardroom and the bedroom.")

Stone did not enter the government after Reagan won the election. Instead, he started a political-consulting and lobbying firm with several co-workers from the campaign. The name of the operation went through several iterations, but it was perhaps best known as Black, Manafort, Stone & Atwater, the latter being Lee Atwater, who had worked briefly in the Reagan White House's political office. The partners made their money by charging blue-chip corporate clients such as Ronald Perelman's MacAndrews & Forbes and Rupert Murdoch's News Corp. large fees to lobby their former campaign colleagues, many of whom had moved into senior posts in the new Administration. There were also less savory clients—Zaire's Mobuto Sese Seko, Angola's UNITA rebels, Philippine President Ferdinand Marcos. Stone and his wife at the time, Ann, became famous for their lavish life style, which included a chauffeur-driven Mercedes and tailor-made clothes. They threw raucous parties for no reason or for almost no reason, like Calvin Coolidge's birthday.

To some people, the idea that Reagan's former campaign operatives would become lobbyists was shocking. In 1985, in what reads like a charming period piece from a vanished era, Jacob Weisberg wrote a profile of Stone in *The New Republic*, which bore the headline "State-of-the-Art Sleazeball." Weisberg said that Stone and his colleagues "have abandoned helping Reagan make conservative ideals reality in order to sell their connections to the highest bidders—whether in service of those ideals or not." Now such connections are so common as to scarcely merit comment. For example, Charles Black ran BKSH & Associates, the successor firm to that original venture, until he took a leave to manage John McCain's campaign for President. And the firm is now a subsidiary of the public-relations conglomerate Burson-Marsteller, whose chief executive is Mark Penn, an adviser to Hillary Clinton's campaign. "So what that means is that Mark Penn is Charlie Black's boss," Stone told me. "And they said I was sleazy." (Black has since resigned from BKSH.)

Stone never much cared for corporate lobbying—or for being part of any large organization—so he stuck to campaign work more than his partners did. (Rule: "No one ever built a statue to a committee.") In 1981, Stone ran his first major campaign on his own, Tom Kean's race for governor of New Jersey against the Democrat Jim Florio. Kean won in a recount.

During the Reagan years in Washington, Stone began cultivating in earnest the image of a lovable rogue. Then, as now, some colleagues and clients found Stone's affectations tiresome, at best. Ed Rollins, who served as President Reagan's first political director, said, "Roger was a fringe player around town. He always had this reputation of being a guy who exaggerated things, who pretended he did things. Roger was never on Nixon's staff, was never on the White House staff. I don't think you'll find anyone in the business who trusts him. Roger was always a little rat."

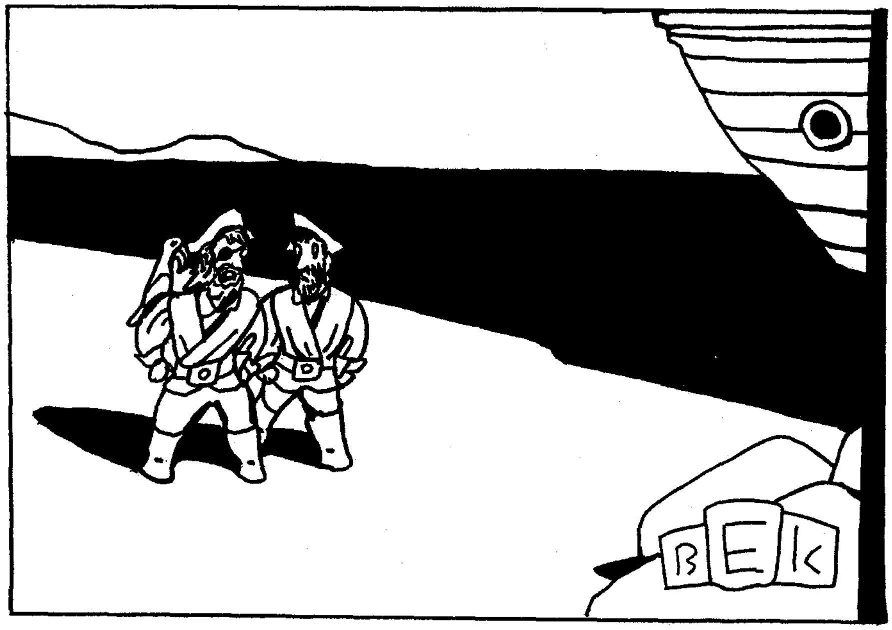
According to Douglas Schoen, a co-founder of the Penn, Schoen & Berland polling firm, with whom Stone has worked on political campaigns over the years, and who regards Stone as a friend, "He's not so much a Republican as an actor who likes to assume poses. The show is not a by-product of his life—it is his life." Hank Sheinkopf remains on good terms with Stone, but recognizes his ability to alienate both allies and adversaries. "He wreaks havoc in his wake," he told me. "When he's on, he's the best, but he is really more about his life than his work. I went tie-shopping with him once, down at the old Barneys, on Seventh Avenue, and it was one of the most memorable experiences of my life. It was a time in his life when he was obsessed with Alan Flusser suits and great ties. He bought about ten of the most beautiful and expensive ties I'd ever seen. But he's moved on. Now he's into watch fobs and hats."

In 1988, Stone worked as a senior consultant to George H. W. Bush's successful campaign against Michael Dukakis, which was managed by Lee Atwater. The experience prompts a rare disclaimer from Stone, who is usually eager to claim credit for hardball tactics. "We had an ad running about the furloughs in Massachusetts, with a revolving door, and it was really polling well—a great ad—and none of the prisoners were identifiable," Stone told me. "But then Atwater came in with this version that had Willie Horton's picture—and he said they were going to have an independent group put it on the air." (Horton was a convicted murderer who committed a rape after fleeing while on furlough from prison in Massachusetts while Dukakis was governor.) "I told Atwater that it was a mistake, that we were winning the issue without having to resort to this racist crap. I told Atwater, 'You are going to get linked to this, and it is gonna follow you and George Bush for the rest of your life.' It did." (Atwater died of a brain tumor in 1991. Other campaign officials told me that they were not in a position to know what Stone said to Atwater about the Horton ad.) For all his bravado, Stone told me that he shied away from racially inflammatory campaign work. He says frequently, "You know, Nixon was the one who desegregated the schools—not that he ever got any credit for it."

After Bush, Sr.,'s victory, Stone returned to his firm, mixing corporate clients and occasional political consulting. He worked on three campaigns for Arlen Specter, the Pennsylvania Republican. He developed a specialty in ballot initiatives, especially about gaming. (Stone doesn't gamble. "The odds are stacked," he told me. "It's a loser's game.") Stone came to prefer working on these kinds of race. "I do a lot of referendums," he said. "They can't talk back. They don't have wives. They don't have friends who tell you how to run the campaign. They are supported by special interests, so there's a lot of money in them." (Rule: "There is only one party—the Green Party.") In the nineties, Stone divorced Ann and married Nydia Bertran, whose father had been a diplomat in pre-Castro Cuba. His wife, whom he invariably refers to as "Mrs. Stone," had family ties in south Florida, and the couple began spending time in Miami.

Stone served as a senior consultant to Bob Dole's 1996 campaign for President, but that assignment ended in a characteristic conflagration. *The National Enquirer*, in a story headlined "Top Dole Aide Caught in Group-Sex Ring," reported that the Stones had apparently run personal ads in a magazine called *Local Swing Fever* and on a Web site that had been set up with Nydia's credit card. "Hot, insatiable lady and her handsome body builder husband, experienced swingers, seek similar couples or exceptional muscular . . . single men," the ad on the Web site stated. The ads sought athletes and military men, while discouraging overweight candidates, and included photographs of the Stones. At the time, Stone claimed that he had been set up by a "very sick individual," but he was forced to resign from Dole's campaign. Stone acknowledged to me that the ads were authentic. "When that whole thing hit the fan in 1996, the reason I gave a blanket denial was that my grandparents were still alive," he said. "I'm not guilty of hypocrisy. I'm a libertarian and a libertine."

When I arrived in Miami, Stone suggested that we meet for lunch at Versailles, a Cuban restaurant on Calle Ocho, in the heart of the city's émigré community. Stone strolled in wearing a perfectly pressed white linen shirt and a panama hat. In his customary defiance of medical convention, Stone makes sure that his skin is bronzed by the sun twelve months a year. (Rule: "White



"I'm trying to focus on the treasures in my life that aren't buried."

shirt + tan face = confidence.") He ordered a triple espresso, one of four or so he drinks every day.

When I asked why he moved to Miami, Stone quoted a Somerset Maugham line: "It's a sunny place for shady people. I fit right in." After leaving Black, Manafort, in the mid-nineties, Stone had operated on his own, hopping from project to project. He ran one of the quixotic independent bids for New York governor of the billionaire Tom Golisano; helped defeat a pro-environment voter initiative in Florida, in 1996; and ran a political campaign in Ukraine. ("I'm the father of the yard sign in Ukraine," Stone told me. "They say, 'Comrade is genius.' ") He realized that he could establish his base anywhere he wanted. "I could see the smoke billowing from the Pentagon on 9/11, and after that I decided to get the hell out of Washington," Stone said at lunch. "That's when I cut my last ties there."

Stone's move to Miami seems almost inevitable. The weather facilitates year-round tanning. And the byzantine politics of the city, with anti-Communism at its core, suits Stone's temperament. "You are at the nexus of Cuban internecine politics, with family rivalries that have carried over from Cuba," Stone said. "This is the nexus for Colombian politics, also a hotbed for Puerto Rican politics. It's all going on right here."

Stone's knowledge of the peculiar world of Miami led to what may be his most enduring political legacy—his role in the resolution of the 2000 Presidential election. *The Enquirer's* disclosures about Stone's personal life had made him radioactive in terms of a public role in the Presidential race, but when the contest came down to a recount in Florida his talent for hand-to-hand political combat was too useful for senior Republicans to ignore. According to Stone, James A. Baker III, the former Secretary of State, who was leading the Bush forces, told his aide Margaret Tutwiler to recruit Stone. (Baker and Tutwiler say that they don't remember this, but that it is possible.) "They asked me to go to Palm Beach County, which was where the first big fight was, but I thought I could do more good here in Miami-Dade," Stone said.

Stone decided to concentrate at first on "the atmospherics," as he put it, which in Miami means radio. Several Spanish-language stations in the city devoted themselves entirely to talk about politics; no print or television outlets could match their influence. The most powerful of these was Radio Mambi, a fifty-thousand-watt station, whose principal owner and on-air voice was Armando Perez-Roura, a Cuban exile who was known as the Cuban-American community's Rush Limbaugh. Radio Mambi was Stone's first stop.

"Latin media is unique in the sense that when you buy advertising you also are buying programming," Stone told me. "If you buy, you get to supply the guests. So I started buying time, and bringing Mrs. Stone, whose command of the Spanish language is better than mine, around to be the guest. The idea we were putting out there was that this was a left-wing power grab by Gore, the same way Fidel Castro did it in Cuba. We were very explicitly drawing that analogy." Stone was fortunate, too (as was Bush), because the recount came soon after the Elián González affair, in which the Clinton-Gore Administration enraged many Miami Cubans by agreeing to return Elián, who was six years old, to his father in Cuba. A local politi-

LOW

It's not happiness, but something else; waiting
for the light to change; a bakery.

It's a lake. It emerges from darkness into the next day surrounded by pines.
There's a couple.

It's a living room. The upholstery is yellow and the furniture is walnut.
They used to lie down on the carpet

between the sofa and the coffee table, after the guests had left.

The cups and saucers were still.

Their memories of everything that occurred took place
with the other's face as a backdrop and sometimes

the air was grainy like a movie about evening, and sometimes there was an ending
in the air that looked like a scene from a different beginning,

in which they are walking.

It took place alongside a scene in which one of them looks up at a brown rooftop
early in March. The ground hadn't softened.

One walked in front of the other breathing.
The other saw a small house as they passed and breathed. The reflections in the windows

made them hear the sounds on the hill: a crow, a dog, and branches—
and they bent into the hour that started just then, like bending to walk under branches.

—*Arda Collins*

cal consultant sold Stone a contact list of activists who had been working on the González case. "We used the list to turn out crowds whenever we wanted," Stone said. "We were telephoning the shit out of all the appropriate demographics."

After our lunch, Stone summoned his chauffeur-driven Jaguar—he owned four Jaguars at the time—to take us downtown, so that he could walk me through the events that concluded the Miami recount. On November 21, 2000, the Florida Supreme Court gave Gore an important victory by ruling that the deadline for recounts would be extended to November 26th. At that point, the top priority for the Gore forces was to get the recounts up and running, especially in Miami-Dade County, which is the most populous in the state. On the Republican side, according to Stone, "The whole idea behind what they were doing was that there had already been one recount of the votes, so we didn't want another. The idea was to shut it down, stop the recount here in Miami." By November 22nd, the recount process had begun, in a conference room on the eighteenth floor of the Stephen P. Clark Government Center, a vast concrete office building on a forlorn plaza in downtown Miami.

The scene in front of the Clark center that morning was volatile—which was, of course, exactly how Stone wanted it. Several thousand mostly pro-Bush protesters had gathered on the sun-baked plaza to insist that the recount be shut down. Early that morning, Perez-Roura, of Radio Mambi, had sent Evilio Cepero, a local activist who sometimes worked for him as a reporter, to broadcast from the scene. Cepero urged Perez-Roura's listeners to join the protest, addressed the growing crowd with a megaphone, and interviewed supporters, like the local members of Congress Lincoln Diaz-Balart and Ileana Ros-Lehtinen. Many held signs that said "SORE/LOSERMAN." Others chanted, "Remember Elián!"

"We set up a Winnebago trailer, right over here," Stone said when we got out of the Jaguar and walked about a block away from the Clark center, on First Street. "I set up my command center there. I had walkie-talkies and cell phones, and I was in touch with our people in the building. Our whole idea was to shut the recount down. That was why we were there. We had the frequency to the Democrats' walkie-talkies and were listening to their communications, but they were so disorganized that we didn't learn much that was useful."

A substantial contingent of young Republican Capitol Hill aides, along with such congressmen as John Sweeney, of New York, who had travelled to Miami, joined in the protest. Thanks to this delegation, the events at the Clark center have come to be known as the "Brooks Brothers riot," but Stone disputes that characterization. "There was a Brooks Brothers contingent, but the crowd in front of the courthouse was largely Spanish," he said. "Most of the people there were people that we drew to the scene."

At one point on November 22nd, Stone said, he heard from an ally in the building that Gore supporters were trying to remove some ballots from the counting room. "One of my pimply-faced contacts said, 'Two commissioners have taken two or three hundred ballots to the elevator,' " Stone said. "I said, 'O.K., follow them. Half you guys go on the elevator and half go in the stairs.' Everyone got sucked up in this. They were trying to keep the doors from being closed. Meanwhile, they were trying to take the rest of the ballots into a back room with no windows. I told our guys to stop them—don't let them close the door! They are trying to keep the door from being closed. There was a lot of screaming and yelling." (In fact, the Gore official in the elevator, Joe Geller, was carrying a single sample ballot.) The dual scenes of chaos—both inside and outside the building—prompted the recount officials to stop their work. The recount in Miami was never re-started, depriving Gore of his best chance to catch up in the over-all state tally.

As is customary with Stone, there is some controversy about his precise role. "I was the guy in charge of the trailer, and I coördinated the Brooks Brothers riot," Brad Blakeman, a lobbyist and political consultant who worked for Bush in Miami, told me. "Roger did not have a role that I know of. His wife may have been on the radio, but I never saw or heard from him." Scoffing at Blakeman's account, Stone asserts that he was in the trailer; he said that he had never heard of Blakeman. (Rule: "Lay low, play dumb, keep moving.")

Four years later, Stone played a similar role in Bush's reëlection campaign. In September, 2004, CBS News aired what it said were newly discovered documents in a report suggesting that George W. Bush had dodged military service in Vietnam. The authenticity of the documents was quickly challenged, and the focus in the news media shifted to whether CBS had been bamboozled into using forgeries, not whether the charges were true. In a CNN interview, Terry McAuliffe, then the head of the Democratic National Committee, seized on a New York *Post* item citing a "hot rumor" that Stone—"an old dirty trickster from the Nixon days," in McAuliffe's words—had forged the documents, presumably to embarrass CBS and help Bush. It was a measure of Stone's reputation at that point that a top Democrat had attempted, on such slim evidence, to link him to a campaign transgression.

"It's so rare that I'm accused of something that I'm not guilty of that I felt I had to respond," Stone told me. Rather than simply deny his involvement, Stone went on cable news to deepen the controversy and lob his own accusation—equally baseless—that the Democrats were somehow involved with the documents. (A Stone rule, borrowed from Gore Vidal: "Never pass up the opportunity to have sex or be on television.") In an interview with CNN, Stone said, "The real question here is, what is the complicity of the Kerry campaign, or what did Max Cleland know and when did he know it?" (Cleland, a former senator from Georgia, was an aide to John Kerry.) Recalling the episode, Stone said that his problem with the potentially forged documents was practical, not moral. "It was nuts to think I had anything to do with those documents," he said. "Those papers were potentially devastating to George Bush. You couldn't put them out there assuming that they would be discredited. You couldn't have assumed that this would redound to Bush's benefit. I believe in bank shots, but that one was too big a risk." Still, Stone was happy to put his seamy reputation to work for the Republican cause. "I definitely saw the opening to be a good party man," Stone said. (Rule: "Nothing is on the level.")

When we first met in Miami, Stone brought along an old friend, Michael Caputo, who has assisted him in various projects over the years. Caputo grew up in upstate New York, where his family runs an insurance business that had a dispute with Eliot Spitzer when he was attorney general. As a form of revenge, Caputo had started two Web sites—spitzerfile.com and newyorkfacts.net—that collected negative press stories about the new governor. With help from a friend who had run computer projects for the Pentagon, Caputo and Stone located the e-mail addresses of many journalists and other prominent people in New York and sent them news of Spitzer's woes. "The left has done a better job of dominating the new space," Stone said. "We're weak on the Web. The whole thing was a labor of love."

It was, in short, Stone's idea of entertainment. "I thought Spitzer was punk, and I wanted to fuck with him any way I could," he said. (Rule: "Hate is a stronger motivator than love.") By the middle of 2007, his Spitzer bashing had become a business, because Stone was hired in June as a consultant to the New York State Senate Republicans.

On August 6th, someone whose voice sounded a great deal like Stone's left a message on the office answering machine of Bernard Spitzer, the governor's eighty-three-year-old father. The caller referred to a possible investigation of loans made by the elder Spitzer to his son's campaigns. "If you resist this subpoena, you will be arrested and brought to Albany," said the caller, who went on, "And there is not a goddam thing your phony, psycho, piece-of-shit son can do about it." Private detectives hired by Bernard Spitzer traced the call to Stone's wife's telephone, but Stone, however implausibly, denied leaving the message. At first, he claimed that on the night of the call he had been attending the Broadway show "Frost/Nixon," but there was no performance that evening. Stone also suggested that his landlord, a Spitzer supporter, had set him up, or that a standup comedian and impressionist had imitated his voice. As a result of the controversy, Stone had to relinquish his position with the State Senate Republicans.

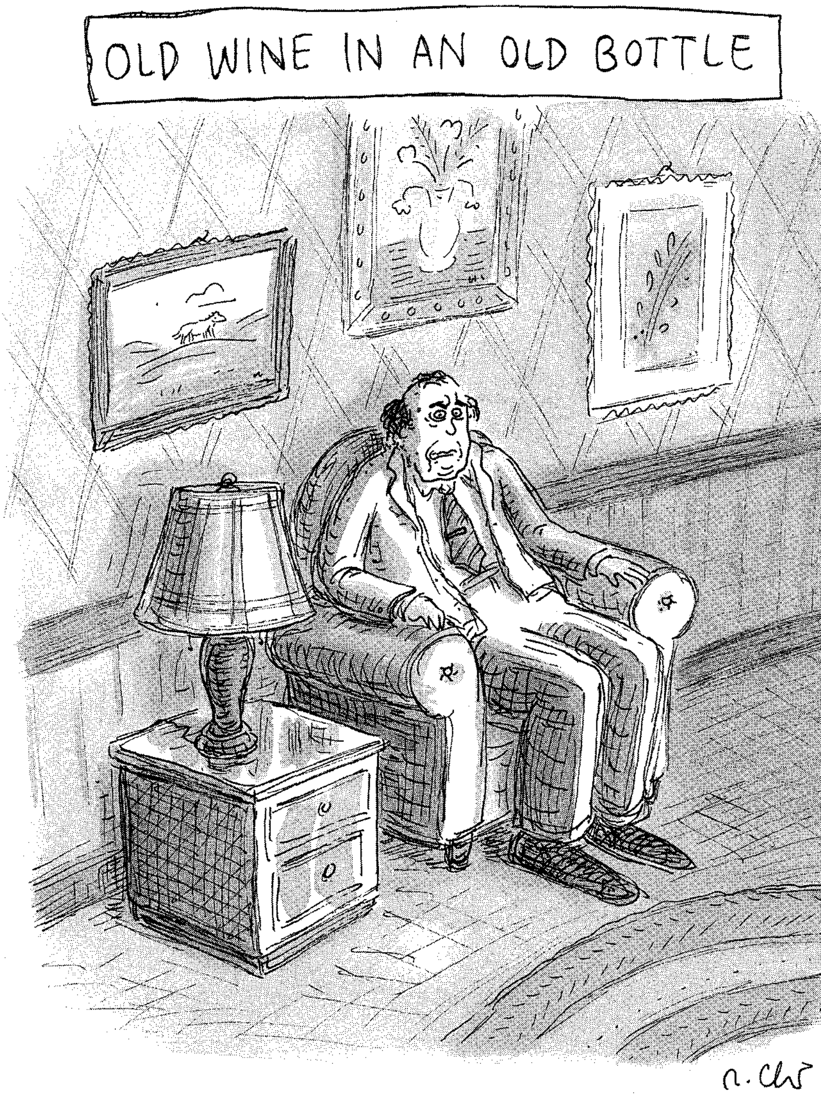
"They caught Roger red-handed lying," Donald Trump said. "What he did was ridiculous and stupid. I lost respect for Eliot Spitzer when he didn't sue Roger Stone for doing that to his father, who is a wonderful man."

"I hope you don't mind changing planes in midair."

The brouhaha over the phone call did little to faze Stone. Some weeks later, he was approached by a pair of F.B.I. agents who may have been in the early stages of an investigation of Spitzer. (Stone says that he doesn't know why the F.B.I. sought him out.) Stone declined to speak with them, but on November 19, 2007, Stone's attorney wrote to the agents and recounted the story that the woman had told him at Miami Velvet, including the part about the socks. ("Perhaps you can use this detail to corroborate Mr. Stone's information," the letter states.) Four months later, Spitzer resigned, after it was revealed that he was a client of the Emperors Club V.I.P., a prostitution ring.

In Stone's mind, this turn of events suggests that he may have played a key role in forcing Spitzer out of office. (He takes satisfaction in noting that a recent New York *Post* report about another prostitute allegedly patronized by Spitzer corroborated the claim that he preferred to wear his socks during sex.) But, as is usually the case with Stone, there is ample reason for skepticism. The F.B.I. declined to comment, but it appears that the bureau was investigating Spitzer because of suspicious money transfers, including some that ultimately went to the Emperors Club; Stone's significance, if any, in that case is hard to assess. Moreover, Roger Portella, the manager of Miami Velvet, told me that his records showed that until our visit earlier this year Stone had not been in the club since 2005. When I asked Stone about this, he said that on the occasion of his conversation with the off-duty prostitute he had come with another Miami Velvet member, and thus did not give his name. "Whether it started with Stone, or he contributed to an ongoing investigation, we have no idea," a member of the Spitzer camp told me. "There is a lot of crazy stuff around the edges of this case. Stone is one part."

In any event, in the months leading up to Spitzer's surprise resignation, Stone did offer his friends cryptic hints of what might be coming. "Roger guaranteed me that Spitzer wouldn't last," Douglas Schoen said. "When the call to the father happened, and he was fired, he said, 'I will last longer than Spitzer will.' I had no idea what he was talking about at the time—no one thought there was a chance that Eliot was going to lose his job. But of course Roger was right."


OLD WINE IN AN OLD BOTTLE

At times, Stone's real party seems to be the vaudevillian rather than the G.O.P. Earlier this year, Stone created an independent political group, known as a 527, to criticize Hillary Clinton, and he dubbed the organization Citizens United Not Timid. The group had no real operations and existed mostly so that Stone could refer to its acronym. I suggested that this was juvenile. "I thought it up in a bar," Stone said. "I was having fun!" (Rule: "Get your carbs from booze—not potatoes, rice, pasta, or bread.") His Jaguar was, at that moment, passing the federal courthouse in Miami, where he had just been sued for trademark infringement by an actual political organization that used the name Citizens United. "It was unbelievable," Stone told me. "We spent a whole half a day in court on this stupid thing. And at the end of the day I announced that I had a new name: Citizens Uniformly Not Timid."

Ultimately, the process—the battle—interests Stone more than the result. Four years ago, he says, he gave advice (free) to Al Sharpton during his run for President, seeing in the Reverend a temperamental, if not a political, kindred spirit. And though Stone remains a Republican, he engages in the sport of seemingly hating many members of his own party, whom he regards, he says, as élitists. After his work for Golisano, Stone nursed a grudge against George Pataki, Spitzer's Republican predecessor, and Stone seems to be gearing up for an anti-Jeb Bush campaign, should the former Florida governor decide to run for President in 2012. "Jeb is waiting in the wings? Over my dead body," Stone said. "The Bushes have brought us to ruin twice—first 1992 and now. I'll see you in New Hampshire to stop it. I'll wait for him."

For the moment, though, Stone must be content to watch the current Presidential race from the sidelines. His only prior dealing with John McCain was bumpy. "I was doing some lobbying for Trump's airline in the eighties, and he was competing for landing slots at LaGuardia against America West Airlines, so I went to see McCain about it in his office at the Capitol," Stone told me. "I made an offhand comment that it wasn't surprising that he was backing America West, because they were based in Phoenix. He stood up and said, 'What the fuck are you talking about? Get the fuck out of my office!' But I didn't take it personally. I supported him in 2000, and I support him now."

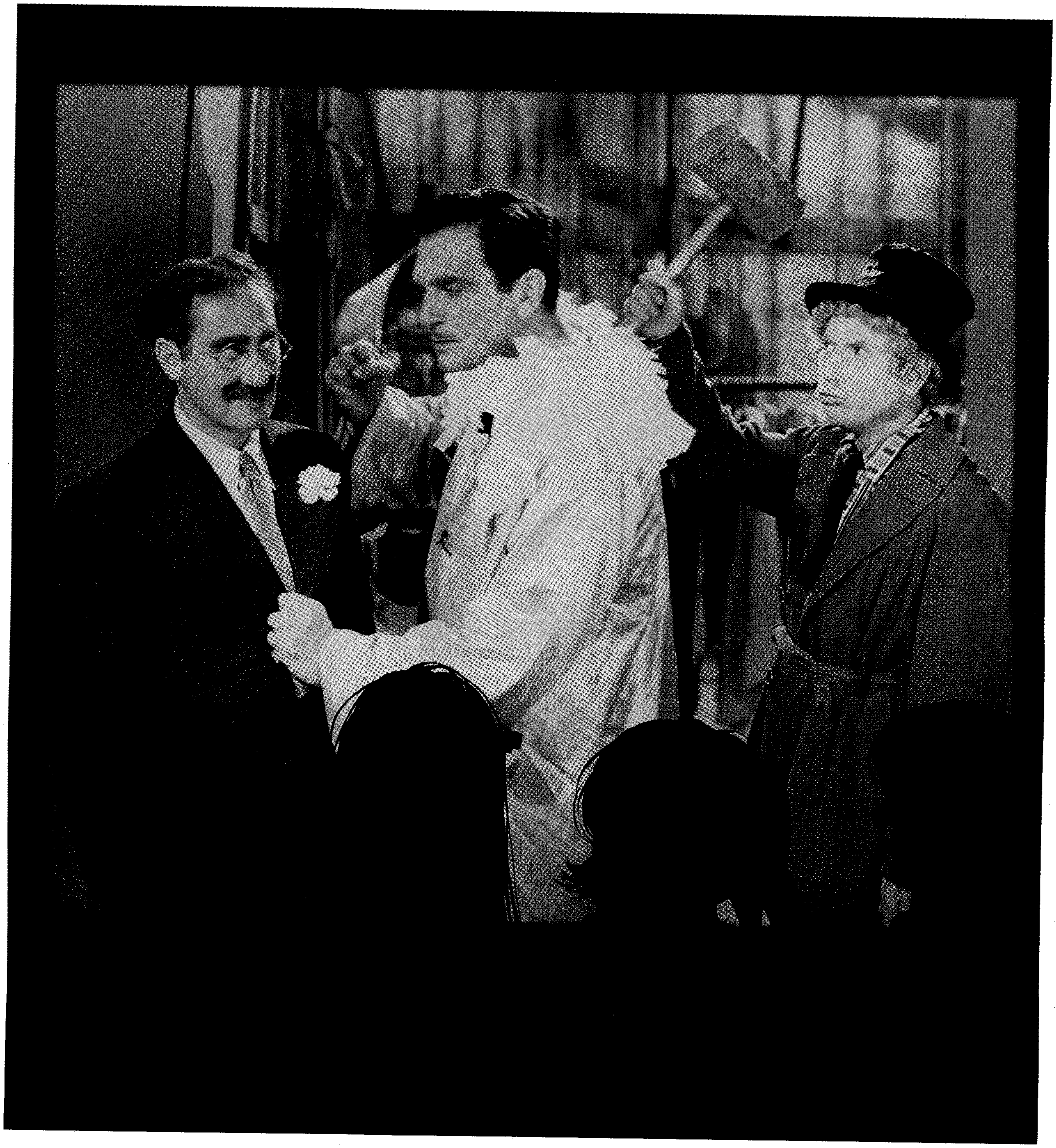
McCain's route to victory, Stone believes, is a Nixonian slash-and-burn campaign against Barack Obama, the likely Democratic nominee. "Obama and his wife are élitists and they're weak," Stone told me. "They don't share middle-class values. Middle-class Americans are proud of their country, and they are not. He thinks he's going to sit down with Iran and Hamas. How do you know he's not going to shake hands with a suicide bomber? You can't sit down with people who don't want to sit down. All he's going to do is raise taxes, which is going to give the government more money but it's not going to create any jobs." Stone added, "McCain himself should not run a slash-and-burn campaign, but a slash-and-burn campaign will have to be run by others." (Rule: "Use a cutout.")

When Stone talks about politics, formulating arguments that candidates can use, he tends to ramp his voice up to a snarl, the way that the message on Bernard Spitzer's answering machine sounded. It's like an actor running lines. But, when he switches back to an analytical mode, Stone immediately turns cheerful, full of love for the game. "Remember," Stone said. "Politics is not about uniting people. It's about dividing people. And getting your fifty-one per cent." (Stone's rule: "The only thing worse in politics than being wrong is being boring.") ♦

FICTION

A NIGHT AT THE OPERA

BY JANET FRAME



We acted the cliché. We melted with laughter. Not the prickly melt that comes from sitting on a hot stove but the cool relaxing melt, in defiance of chemistry, like dropping deep into a liquid feather bed. We did not know or remember the reason for laughing. There was a film, yes: a dumb sad man with hair like wheat and round eyes like paddling pools; another man with a mustache like a toy hearth brush; and many other people and things—blondes, irate managers, stepladders, whitewash, all the stuff of farce. And there was a darkened opera house growing cardboard trees and shining wooden moons.

I shall never know why we laughed so much. Perhaps other films had been as funny, but this one seemed to contain for us a total laughter, a storehouse of laughter, like a hive where we children, spindly-legged as bees, would forever bring our foragings of fun to mellow and replenish this almost unbelievably collapsing mirth.

Nor was it the kind of laughter that cheats by turning in the end to tears, or by needing reinforcement with imagery. It was, simply, like being thrown on a swing into the sky, and the swing staying there, as in one of those trick pictures we had seen so often and marvelled at—divers leaping back to the springboard, horses racing back to the starting barrier. It was like stepping off the swing and promenading the sky.

After the film, we managed somehow to walk home. The afternoon was ragged with leaves and the dreary, hungry untidiness of a child's half past four. Faces and streets seemed wet and serious. The hem of sky, undone, hung down dirty and gray.

But the laughter stayed with us, crippling, floating, rolling, aching, dissolving.

"It must have been a comic picture," our mother said, not knowing, not knowing, when she saw our faces.

The refractory, or *disturbed,* part of the hospital, known as Park House, was built a safe distance from the bright admission ward, where the pastel walls were hung with soothing seascapes and sunset-occupied skies, where two-toned autumnal rugs matched the golden bedspreads, and where floral curtains bunched themselves across wide-opening unbarred windows. The door of the admission ward stood unlocked, in the modern way, and the path led to a lawn, bright green like a lawn in a shopwindow where a wax man is mowing. In the center, a marooned willow wept, with no pool. Birds flipped themselves, dry and hot, in the empty birdbath. Circling the lawn was a high red brick wall, dressed in a seemly way with slowly burning ivy. A country retreat? Yes, a country retreat. Gentle patients, exclaiming at the beauty and calm of it all, wandered in and out of the ward, or sat, at meals, in the light airy dining room, with napkins matching the tablecloths spread in front of them. They said grace. They pursued civilized conversation.

Park House squatted directly opposite the door of the hospital kitchen, like a dirty brick imbecile waiting for food. Its buildings were old, and leaked in the winter, water running down the inside of the plaster walls. The dayroom, blessed with a timely and multiple personality, served as dayroom, dining room, and playroom, a huge space lined with long heavy tables like castoff banquet tables, and long wooden benches, split and seamed with dirt, and shiny from being sat on. And the people who played and dined and spent the day there? They were the violent, the uncontrollably deluded and hallucinated, those who had murdered or would murder, the sadly deformed, the speechless. And up on the wall, sitting primly and securely in its wire cage, the electric clock looked down, saying *tick tock, tick tock,* the way clocks are supposed to. It was a strange, unreal sound, like the sound of knitting; it was as if someone had mistaken the Last Judgment for an afternoon tea party or a sewing bee. For what communication could the clock hold with that world, where time, tribal and primitive, told itself not by hours and minutes but by years of the lion and the panther and days of the hurricane, by hours of getting up, using the toilet, eating, going to bed, by days of sausages and saveloys, of bathing, of hair being combed with kerosene to discourage the lice, of head operations, of official inspections. The weeks had no name, nor the months, nor the years. Once, on a privileged walk, there was for me the Time of the Striped Waterfall, but I am not sure if it actually happened, for I was butcher-frocked and hallucinated, with my name on a list called Prefrontal Leukotomy.

The patients of Park House could not, of course, be taken to the Hospital Hall. The way there led through winding, urine-scented passages, past dormitories where ghostly, wildly staring men exposed themselves, standing in rows by the windows, or pressed their faces up to the glass, like people trying to climb in or out of mirrors. Sometimes we learned weeks afterward that a dance had been held at Hospital Hall, or a concert to which members of the public came, and where the Superintendent had got up and given a talk about the New Attitude; or that the patients had performed a play there, under the supervision of an enthusiastic young doctor, and local drama clubs had been invited, along with newspaper critics, who had used the words "promising," "talented," "therapeutic." One day, when a wildly struggling woman was dragged into the ward, we learned that she had been the lion's back legs and tail in "Androcles and the Lion."

Ah, well, perhaps we were our own drama. There were two Christs, one Queen of Norway, no female Napoleons; there was Millie, as round as the full moon, who had dressed up as a man, taken an axe, and murdered three people on a lonely farm; there was Elna, who had held her child under the water in the washing tub, holding it there till it no longer struggled; there were those whose arms were folded close in cloth or canvas straitjackets; and there were the many who suffered from having no interesting delusions, who were not known as characters, and were not pointed out with pride because they had murdered or would murder or lay claim to European thrones. They were the self-centered, irritating epileptics, the paranoiacs, proud and persecuted. And the huddled quiet ones with sun-stained faces—in their quietness, a different kind of violence, an assault on everything that we imagined human. There was no place for them but Park House. They sat in the

ILLUSTRATION BY ZOHAR LAZAR, PHOTO COURTESY MGM/PHOTOFEST

sun and rain alike, wearing no shoes or pants, their world or no-world contained in their minds, and other people might as well have been planets or stones or anything, as long as they were not identified. The violence of these patients lay in their refusal to name or be named. They sat in their straitjackets for meals at one of the long tables, and their throats were massaged to make them swallow, as if touch could provide some clue to the name and nature of their bodies. Then they would lumber out again into the sun or rain, with their hands and feet disowned by their minds, and their blood heavy and blue and swollen; in the yard, unaccustomed to walking, they moved stiffly, like blue snowmen.

So days passed, and weeks and perhaps years. Sausage days came and went; rice days snowed on us. We had honey one day, thickly peopled with ants, but honey, and apple pie made of little burned apples, topped with pastry that tasted like damp cotton wool layered with scorched brown paper. But we liked it, and we asked for more. Doctors visited, and went away shaking their heads; new doctors fled timidly through the screams and cries of the park and the yard. Heads were shaved, and head operations performed, and the strange people with bandaged heads and damp faces and ink-filled eyes lay in the small rooms along the corridor, stared at with fear by patients and nurses alike. One heard the conversation after a few days: "Hasn't Molly changed? You wouldn't know Marion. Cristina's so docile. She spoke today. I've never heard her speak before." Yet, as more days and weeks passed, there was Molly sitting nameless and dead in a corner of the dayroom, and Cristina with the blank eyes, giggling and saying nothing, and Marion in a canvas jacket, being taken to solitary confinement. Once, someone was allowed to go home, and was returned by terrified parents, unable to face the estrangement of her simple cooing and rocking in all-day masturbation. And, once, someone else, Leila or Doris or Nora, was promoted to another ward, and went with envious farewells—not to the admission ward, that would have been too much to hope for, but to a place where they had rugs on the floor and a tablecloth on the table, but no contemporary furniture. The seats in that dayroom were like seats taken from old-fashioned motorcars or railway carriages. Sitting on the buttoned and worn splitting leather, one had the absurd sensation of travelling, so that if one sat close enough to the windows, which opened six inches only, and looked out at the unattainable sky and not at the animal-filled park, one could quite easily imagine oneself out for a Sunday-afternoon run in the country.

Then, suddenly, one day in early summer, the Superintendent became determined about the New Attitude, and the need for Park House to have a share in it. He was a kindly man who liked pastel shades and pictures of lakes and bright bedspreads; he was also realistic enough to imagine that a few films of murders and barroom brawls and lovely ladies kissing handsome men would help the patients of Park House to face what was called the "real world." And he was sensible enough to know that Park House people could never be taken to see films in the Hospital Hall, mingling there with the gentle convalescents who carried handbags, and wore their own clothes, and used handkerchiefs.

So it was decided to show films in Park House itself, in the dayroom, after the more violently uncontrollable patients had been put to bed. There would be no screen. The walls, though gravy- and sausage-stained, and stuck with bits of apple pie, were of a light color, but unfortunately there were no blinds, and the daylight at that time of year was not of a secretive nature but outspoken and honest, and preferred the company of the sky to being tucked down between hills. Our bedtime was half past six. How could we see a film in that light? "Your bedtime can be extended, an hour perhaps," the matron said graciously. The first film, it was decided, would be shown in a week's time, on a Tuesday.

Oh, it did not seem possible, such bliss. For Tuesday was sausage day—of very real and symbolic value in a ward of women. It was also canteen day, when the Sister of the ward went with a large clothes basket to the canteen and returned with tins of biscuits, which were not for us, and tins of sweets, which were thrown in handfuls into the middle of the dayroom, prompting a lively scramble and a few black eyes and bleeding noses. They were paper sweets, with mint intestines, and words written on the outside of the wrapper, "The Sweet for All Times and All Places," so that, eating them, one felt a delicious sense of inclusiveness.

There was not really much excitement in the week of waiting for our first film to be shown. Each day had its small pleasures: food; fights; the appearance of the doctor, perhaps a smile from him; the occasional escapes. (Timmy, who made a daring escape, also made the mistake of paying the taxi-driver with a check made of toilet paper.) For me, there was a visit to the kitchen to collect a tray of stew. There I saw what looked like the activity of a whaling station: huge vats of meat boiling; a man with long hairy arms using one of them to stir a copper pot full of semolina; trays of white failed scones. It was also in that week that I managed to get hold of a book to read, by finding a small locked shelf where three volumes rather drunkenly held each other up: "A Girl of the Limberlost," "Moths of the Limberlost" (I remembered my mother saying what lovely books these were), and another book, which I read, about a sheepdog who gets his university degree and becomes a lecturer at the University of Glasgow. It was also in that week that we spent a whole day downstairs in the yard, in the sun; climbing on the veranda rail, we could look out over the harbor and see the tide drawing slowly in toward the streaked gray mudflats, and the lines of warmth dancing up and up into the sky. From somewhere in the city we heard a tramcar and a three-o'clock factory whistle, and then we knew that the world was still there, and people still went out shopping, and worked in factories, making biscuits and blue bags and plastic raincoats.

Tuesday came. The impossibly violent people, like naughty children, were whisked off to bed. A timid-looking new attendant entered the dayroom and built a fence of benches around himself and set up a projector. Then he announced the name of the film.

"It is," he said, "the Marx Brothers in 'A Night at the Opera.' "

And then I remembered the laughter, the stifling, collapsing laughter, the pails of whitewash, and the banana skins, and the stepladders and garden rakes, all the beautiful paraphernalia of accepted nonsense, without any strangeness or fear in it, no monstrous ballooning faces phosphorescent in the dark, just something obviously and happily mad. "A Night at the Opera." I waited. The attendant, still looking timidly about him, began to show the film.

The projector whirred and the pictures danced about, finding focus on the pale wall, then they settled, and the sound began, raucous and quick, and the blurred wall cleared a little, but not much—the room was so light—then there was a cry and a whirring sound and a noise like water, and the people in the film retraced their lives swiftly and relentlessly. The film began again. We saw figures moving about, laughing in a stupid fashion, talking quickly or not at all or out of step with the violent whining sound. Light speared the screen, like rain, and flickered, and all the time the dumb sad man with the round eyes like paddling pools and the hair like wheat stood in rain, whether the sun was shining or not; he was pathetic and strange, and his companion, the little man with the toy hearth brush for a mustache, seemed shrunken, as if he hadn't had enough to eat, and cold, standing there in the rain. One of the patients ran up to him and tried to stroke his face; another shook her fist at him; another blotted out the whole screen with the shadow of her magnified head. Then something funny happened. I cannot remember what it was, but I laughed, dutifully.

It was no use, I knew that. The laughter had gone; the characters were speaking another language.

"Shall I go on?" the attendant asked, when Noeline punched Lorna in the stomach. "It's really too light to show it, and"—he pointed to the patients, who were becoming more and more restless—"the experiment doesn't seem to be working."

"A little longer," the Sister said, wiping away the traces of her lonely laughter. "It's their bedtime soon, anyway."

Darkness came suddenly then, as it does in the North, and the film stopped raining, and there they were, the blond women and the little man and his sad dumb companion, playing his harp, his curls like wheat hanging over his eyes. So it really was the same film I'd seen years ago, "A Night at the Opera," but it wasn't total laughter because nothing can be total laughter unless it is also total tears, and it wasn't that, either.

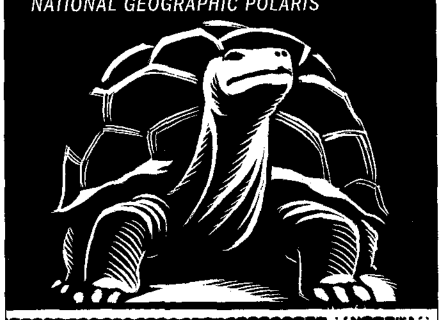
Then, toward the end of the picture, by some trick of the light, the rain began again, and the people waved and swam, as if they were drowning fast, and the sound broke down with a harsh cry that turned into a wailing, like the wind in the top branches of a tree. In the opera house, the moon shone; a cardboard palace toppled over and was trampled on; all in silence now.

And then the film ended, abruptly. Someone ran to the black-stained wall and pummelled it with her fists, as if she were knocking at the door of a secret room that would open to reveal the treasure there for everyone to take, as in the story. But nothing like that happened; there were no secret panels.

The attendant placed the film in a flat silver box marked "Urgent," gave a scared look about him, and moved toward the door.

"Bed, ladies," a nurse called out in a reminding voice.

So we went to bed, assaulted by sleep that fumed at us from medicine glasses, or was wielded from small sweet-coated tablets—dainty bricks of dream wrapped in the silk stockings of oblivion. The shutters were closed across the wooden moon. Outside, in the hospital grounds, where the gardens were, a fake wind shook the cardboard trees in a riot of collapsing mirth. Then the day's thin scenery toppled over, revealing the true dark. A real wind came blowing clearly, without pretense or laughter, from the cold actual sea, and spread its layers of knives across the empty stage. Unless it was protected by some miracle of faith, tomorrow would bleed, walking here. ♦



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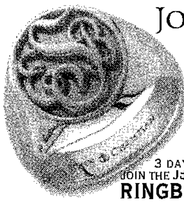

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THE CRITICS

ABOVE: BENOÎT JACQUES

THE SKY LINE

OUT OF THE BLOCKS

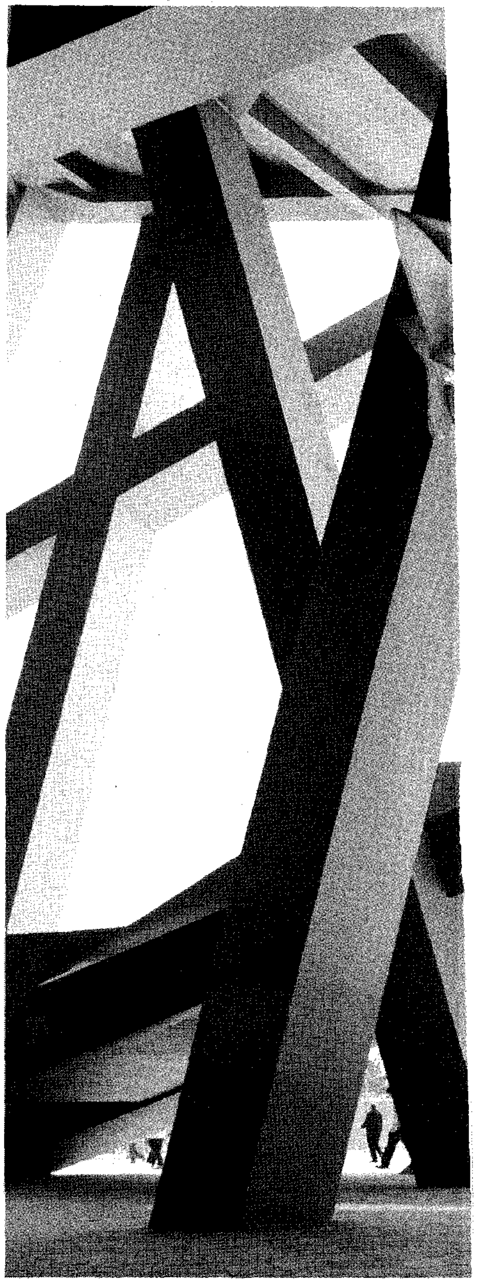
Beijing's Olympic architecture is spectacular, but what message does it send?

BY PAUL GOLDBERGER

To understand just how important the Beijing Olympics are to China, you have only to look at where the Olympic Green has been built. During Beijing's first building boom—six hundred years before the current one—the city was laid out symmetrically on either side of a north-south axis. As in Paris—where the Louvre lines up with the Tuileries, the Arc de Triomphe, and the Champs-Élysées—Beijing's most symbolically important structures have fallen along the main axis. In the center is the former imperial residence of the Forbidden City. North of this is the Jingshan, a park surrounding an artificial hill where the last Ming emperor is said to have hanged himself, and, beyond that, the Drum Tower and the Bell Tower, which for centuries helped Beijing's inhabitants tell the time. In 1958, when the Communists expanded Tiananmen Square, at the southern gate of the Forbidden City, they placed the Monument to the People's Heroes on the same axis, in the center of the square. Mao Zedong's mausoleum, also in the square, is on the axis, too. And now, spread over twenty-eight hundred acres at the opposite end of the axis, is Beijing's Olympic Green. If Tiananmen Square is a monument to the Maoist policy of self-sufficiency, the Olympic Green, ten miles and fifty years away, is an architectural statement of intent every bit as clear—a testament to the global ambitions of the world's fastest-growing major economy.

At least two of the buildings on the Olympic Green—the National Stadium, by the Swiss architects Jacques Herzog and Pierre de Meuron, and the National Aquatics Center, by the Australian firm PTW Architects—are as innovative as any architecture on the planet, marvels of imagination and engineering that few countries would have the nerve or the money to attempt. The Chinese, right now, have plenty of both. These buildings, some of the most advanced in the world, are made possible partly by the presence of huge numbers of low-paid migrant workers. When I visited the stadium with Linxi Dong, the architect who heads Herzog and de Meuron's Beijing office, he told me that the construction crew for his project numbered nine thousand at its peak.

The National Stadium is already widely known by an apt nickname, the Bird's Nest. The concrete wall of the arena is wrapped with a latticework exterior of crisscrossing columns and beams, a tangle of twisting steel twigs. The lattice arcs upward and inward over the stadium's seats (there are ninety-one thousand), supporting a translucent roof and forming an oculus around the track. The center of the roof, over the field, has been left open. The engineering required to keep all this metal in the air is highly sophisticated: the building may look like a huge steel sculpture, but most of the beams are structural, not decorative. The drama of the Bird's Nest is even more arresting than that of the Allianz Arena, the Munich soccer stadium, which Herzog and de Meuron sheathed entirely in billows of translucent plastic, in 2005. Much of the spectacle derives from the interplay of the steel lattice and the concrete shell underneath. The outer wall of the concrete structure is painted bright red—one of the building's few overtly nationalistic touches—and when lit up at night it shines through the latticework, an enormous red egg glowing inside its nest. On leaving, you experience the excitement of the knotted metal in a new way, looking out over Beijing through the wacky frame of the slanting columns.



The steel lattice surrounding the Beijing Natior

Next door to the Bird's Nest is the

adium looks like a gigantic sculpture, but most of the beams are structural, not decorative. Photograph by Iwan Baan.

Aquatics Center, known as the Water Cube, a rectilinear building with a blue-gray exterior of translucent plastic pillows set in an irregular pattern intended to evoke bubbles. John Pauline, who is the head of the Beijing office of PTW Architects, told me that the design emerged from a desire to find a way of expressing the feeling of water. "We started out with ripples and waves and steam," he said. "We basically looked at every state of water we could imagine. And then we hit on the idea of foam." Working with the engineering firm Arup, which also collaborated on the Bird's Nest, PTW developed cladding made of variously sized cells of ETFE, or ethylene tetrafluoroethylene, a translucent plastic somewhat similar to Teflon. Among architects, ETFE is the material of the moment—Herzog and de Meuron used it for the façade of their Munich stadium and for the roof of the Bird's Nest—and it has many practical virtues. It weighs only one per cent as much as glass, transmits light more effectively, and is a better insulator, resulting in a thirty-per-cent saving in energy costs. Furthermore, the pillows don't just evoke bubbles; they *are* bubbles, twin films of ETFE, eight one-thousandths of an inch thick, placed together to form a cell, which is then inflated.

The real achievement of the Water Cube is less its technical wizardry than the transformation of the faintly trite idea of a bubble building into a piece of elegant, enigmatic architecture. The architects decided that, to play off the oval shape of the Bird's Nest, the Aquatics Center would have to be square, and the constraint of straight lines seems to have insured that the bubble metaphor didn't get out of hand. The Water Cube's walls suggest the soap foam on a shower door—or perhaps, since some of the bubbles are as much as twenty-four feet across, on the slide of a microscope. From the outside, the almost random arrangement of cells establishes a kind of correspondence with the irregular struts of the Bird's Nest. When you are inside the main hall of the Water Cube, the pattern of cells above and the green-blue tinge of the pool give you the feeling of being under water yourself and looking up toward the surface.

Although China's burgeoning wealth owes much to its export industries, for the Olympics the country has been content to play the reverse role, buying the most futuristic architecture that the rest of the world has to offer, rather than showcasing native talent. The work of Chinese architects has largely been relegated to a jumble of functional but uninspiring buildings. (There are thirty-one Olympic venues in all.) An important exception is Digital Beijing, a control center on the Olympic Green, designed by a Chinese firm, Studio Pei Zhu. Like the Water Cube, Digital Beijing steers dangerously close to a kitschy conceit. It consists of four narrow slabs set close together in parallel to resemble a row of microchips or, perhaps, hard drives. Some of the walls have glass cutouts in a linear pattern clearly designed to evoke a circuit board—they light up green at night. Yet the finished building has a dignity that is surprising. This is due in part to Pei Zhu's choice of materials—the walls are clad in a sober grayish stone—and in part to the proportions of the four slabs, whose narrowness and lack of adornment give the building an austerity that is the opposite of kitsch.

Pei Zhu may be Chinese, but his building is thoroughly international in style. (He was educated at the University of California and has worked both in China and abroad.) Indeed, apart from the red of the Bird's Nest, there is little that is traditionally Chinese in any of the Olympic developments. The scale and ambition of the project is an unmistakable statement of national pride, yet China, strangely, has been content to make this statement using the vocabulary of the kind of international luxury-modernism that you might just as easily see in Dubai or SoHo or Stuttgart—dizzyingly complex computer-generated designs, gorgeously realized in fashionable materials. The message seems clear: anything you can do, we can do better.

The first Olympic Games of the modern era, in 1896, were held in an ancient stadium in Athens that the Greeks refurbished for the occasion. The swimming events took place in the Aegean Sea. The next Olympics, in Paris in 1900, had no stadium at all. The track-and-field competitions were held on the streets of the city and on the grass of the Bois de Boulogne, which the French did not want to disfigure with a proper track. Swimmers were left to cope with the currents of the Seine.

The idea that cities could attract the Olympics by promising lavish facilities probably began after 1906, when the eruption of Mt. Vesuvius put an end to a plan to have the 1908 Games in Rome. The British saw Italy's misfortune as an opportunity and offered to build a stadium big enough to hold a hundred and fifty thousand people, in Shepherd's Bush, London. The White City Stadium, as it was called, was the first stadium to be erected specifically for the Olympics. Soon, countries were openly vying with one another to host the Games. (What is the Olympic ideal, after all, but national rivalry dressed up as global amity?) The apogee of triumphalism was reached, notoriously, in Berlin, in 1936, when Hitler, who wasn't yet in power when the Games were awarded to the city, embraced the Olympics as the way to show off the might of the Nazi regime. Architecture was as much a part of his vision as the gold medals, though his taste ran to the turgid and overblown. He tore down a perfectly good, barely used stadium, replaced it with the largest stadium in the world, and then built a hundred-and-thirty-acre Olympic Village, with a hundred and forty buildings laid out in the shape of a map of Germany.

Since the Second World War, host countries have avoided such bombastic excess, but they have usually seen the Olympics as an opportunity to pin a gold medal on one or more of their leading architects. There was Pier Luigi Nervi's innovative, seemingly floating concrete dome on his stadium for the Rome Olympics, in 1960; Kenzo Tange's swooping, sculptural gymnasium for Tokyo, in 1964; Günter Behnisch and Frei Otto's canopied stadium for Munich, in 1972. For the Barcelona Olympics, in 1992, the Spanish architect Santiago Calatrava was enlisted to build a communications tower that would serve as an Olympic symbol. Calatrava's angular, precarious-looking design, inspired by an arm holding the Olympic torch, established his worldwide reputation and remains one of the city's most visible structures. But the Barcelona Olympics also marked a new approach to Olympic architecture, one that placed as much emphasis on the relationship between the city and its facilities as on the sports venues themselves. Barcelona used the Games as an occasion to redevelop its waterfront and design a series of new parks, fountains, and works of public art to attract tour-

GOOD STRIPPER COP / BAD STRIPPER COP

ists after the Games were over. Since then, cities have been keen to use the Olympics to leverage other civic improvements, on the premise that if you're spending billions to refurbish a city you should at least invest in buildings that have long-term utility. That's why the legacy of the 1996 Olympics, in Atlanta, isn't any of the athletic buildings but a major new park and housing for athletes that became new dormitories for Georgia Tech.

The plan for the 2012 Olympics, in London, takes this idea a step further. Although there is one flashy commission for a British architect (an aquatics center, designed by Zaha Hadid, in the form of a giant wave), the London Olympics are distinctly short on architectural extravaganzas. The main stadium, to be designed by a large American firm that has had a lock on football and baseball stadiums for years, will be dull compared to the Bird's Nest. When I talked to Ricky Burdett, a professor of architecture and urbanism at the London School of Economics, who is an adviser to the London Olympics, he told me that London did not feel the need to prove itself through spectacular works of Olympic architecture. "We had a big debate over whether we should build a new stadium at all," he said. "We were much more interested in how an intervention on this scale will affect a city socially and culturally." The British government plans to invest roughly nineteen billion dollars in an Olympic site, in the East End of London. When the Olympics end, much of the area will become a park, and sales of private development sites around it are expected to enable the government to recoup much of its investment. Burdett said, "London has always been poor in the east and rich in the west. The London Olympics can rebalance London."

Beijing, evidently, has other priorities. For all the sleek modernity of much of the construction, there's no mistaking the old-fashioned monumentalist approach behind it. This is an Olympics driven by image, not by sensitive urban planning. It's true that there has been a much needed and well-executed expansion of Beijing's subway system, but most of the impact of the Olympics has been cosmetic—the trees planted along the expressway to the airport, for example, or the cleanup of some of the roadways leading to the Olympic Green. Bordering one stretch of congested elevated ring road, stone walls, like the ones surrounding the old Beijing *hutongs*, or alleyway neighborhoods, have been erected. But, with not much behind them, they are little more than a stage set—Potemkin *hutongs* designed to distract visitors from the fact that so many real *hutongs* are being demolished for high-rise construction. In today's Beijing, forcible eviction is common, and hundreds of thousands of people have been displaced to make way for the Olympics. The brightness of the Olympic halo gives Beijing's relentless expansion a surface sheen, but it's only a distraction from the city's deeper planning problems, such as air and water pollution and overcrowding.

In general, the Chinese authorities have been less interested in solving these problems than in keeping the construction engine going at full throttle. Still, the Olympic site did require some planning and, in 2002, a competition was held to create a master plan. It attracted entries from ninety-six architects around the world, and was won by a Boston firm, Sasaki Associates. Despite its straight-line connection to the Forbidden City, the Olympic Green lies in a district that, in recent years, has become a forest of undistinguished high-rise apartment buildings and commercial towers. (The site also includes a mundane athletic compound erected for the 1985 Asian Games, and these leftover structures are all being refurbished for the Olympics.) Dennis Pieprz, the president of Sasaki, who was in charge of the scheme, explained to me that the firm struggled for a long time with the question of how to treat Beijing's axis. The Chinese tradition of aligning important public buildings created "a huge temptation to put the stadium right on the axis," he said. "But we decided that in the twenty-first century we were beyond that, and that we should, instead, symbolize infinity, and the idea of the people in the center, not a building." So Sasaki placed the stadium just to the east of the axis and the Water Cube just to the west; the space directly on the axis was left open.

Pieprz told me that he felt that considering the long-term use of the site was essential. "We needed a plan that could accept other civic, cultural, recreational, and commercial uses, so the place would become a major destination," he said. Sasaki envisions the Olympic site as becoming a large park, with each of the major buildings taking on a public function. The Bird's Nest will remain as the national stadium, its capacity reduced to a more practical eighty thousand by the removal of several tiers of seats; the Water Cube will lose almost two-thirds of its seventeen thousand seats, the upper tiers to be replaced by multipurpose rooms. "You are making a city, not a spatial extravaganza that will be interesting just for sixteen days," Pieprz said.

But, whatever the architects feel, it's not clear that the Chinese are really that interested in long-term uses. The focus is on August, and on confirming before the world Beijing's status as a modern, global city. However well the buildings are refitted afterward, it's hard to see how the Olympic park will relate to the rest of the city, beyond being a welcome piece of green space in an increasingly built-up, sprawling metropolis. The success of what China has built for the Olympics will ultimately be measured not by how these buildings look during the Games but by the kind of change they bring about in the city. The billions of dollars spent on the Olympic site, after all, are only a fraction of the money that has been invested in construction in Beijing since the Games were awarded to the city, in 2001. The city, however, has yet to build a public space as inventive as that of post-Olympics Barcelona, or to think of the impact of the Olympics in terms as sophisticated as pre-Olympics London. In both conception and execution, the best of Beijing's Olympic architecture is unimpeachably brilliant. But the development also exemplifies traits—the reckless embrace of the fashionable and the global, the authoritarian planning heedless of human cost—that are elsewhere denaturing, even destroying, the fabric of the city. ♦

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More photographs from Beijing, and an audio interview with Paul Goldberger.

land's Professor Jennings gives a lecture on "Paradise Lost," taking a bite of an apple as he suggests that the Devil has more fun, before confessing to his unresponsive students that even "Mrs. Milton found Milton boring," and so does he.

That judgment, alas, still clings to Milton. Never mind that there were actually three Mrs. Miltons, and that Milton, who defended divorce and even polygamy, was a sensuous Puritan, exquisitely attuned to the "amorous delay" of life in Eden: Adam and Eve have sex in the garden *before* they eat the apple. Never mind that Milton participated in an earth-shattering revolution in which he defended the killing of a king; that he was a radical poet who, though he had imaginative power to burn, put aside his art for a decade of political activism. Never mind that he survived imprisonment, the threat of execution and assassination, the plague and the Great Fire of London, and, blind and disillusioned, dictated the greatest long poem in the English language.

A CRITIC AT LARGE

RETURN TO PARADISE

The enduring relevance of John Milton.

BY JONATHAN ROSEN

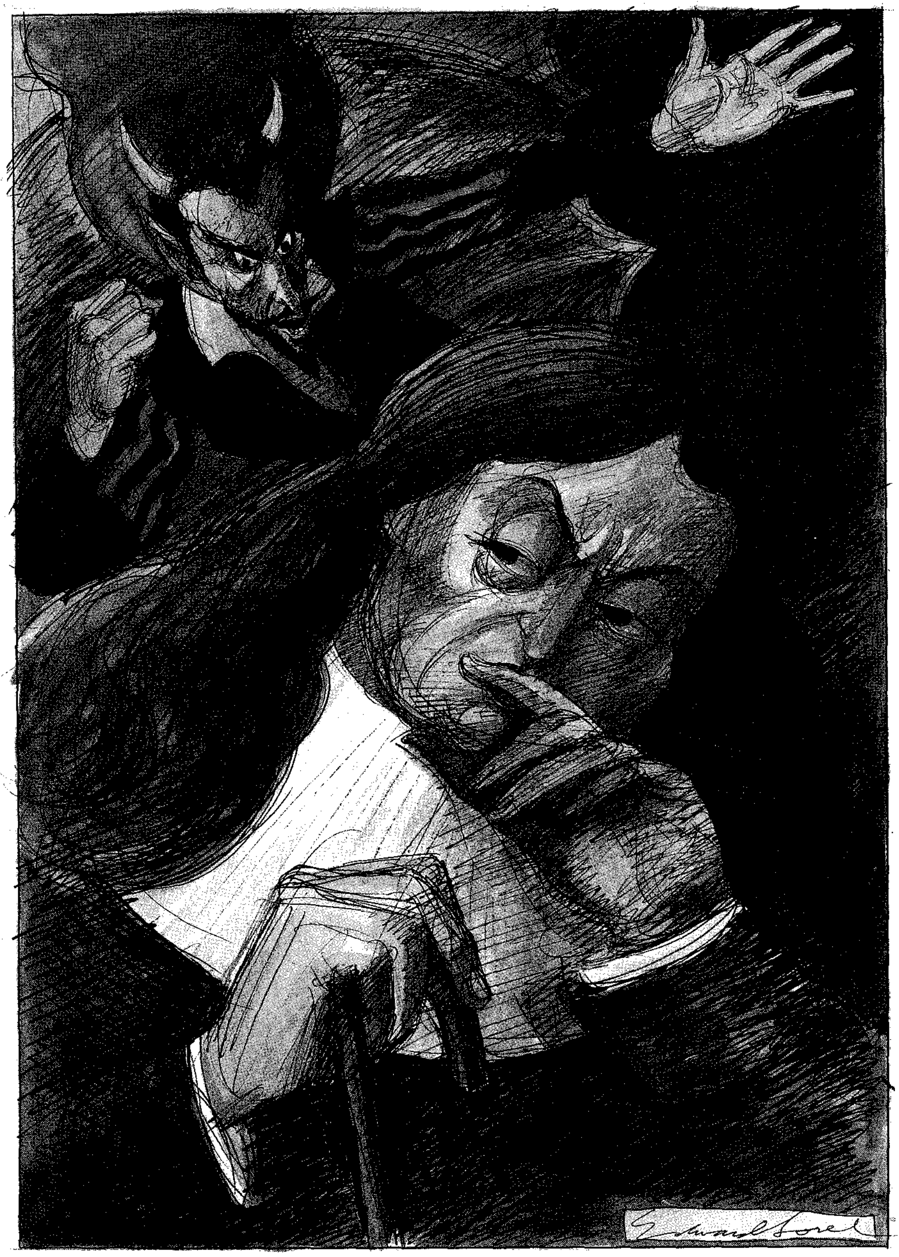
Sometime in 1638, John Milton visited Galileo Galilei in Florence. The great astronomer was old and blind and under house arrest, confined by order of the Inquisition, which had forced him to recant his belief that the earth revolves around the sun, as formulated in his "Dialogue Concerning the Two Chief World Systems." Milton was thirty years old—his own blindness, his own arrest, and his own cosmological epic, "Paradise Lost," all lay before him. But the encounter left a deep imprint on him. It crept into "Paradise Lost," where Satan's shield looks like the moon seen through Galileo's telescope, and in Milton's great defense of free speech, "Areopagitica," Milton recalls his visit to Galileo and warns that England will buckle under inquisitorial forces if it bows to censorship, "an undeserved thraldom upon learning."

Beyond the sheer pleasure of picturing the encounter—it's like those comic-book specials in which Superman meets Batman—there's something strange about imagining these two figures inhabiting the same age. Though Milton was the much younger man, in some ways his world system seems curiously older than the astronomer's empirical universe. Milton depicted the earth hanging fixed from a golden chain, and when he contemplated the heavens he saw God enthroned and angels warring. The sense of the new and the old colliding forms part of Milton's complex aura. The best-known portrait of his mature years makes Milton look like the dyspeptic brother of the man on the Quaker Oats box, but he is far more our contemporary than Shakespeare, who died when Milton was seven. Nobody would ever wonder whether Milton was really the author of his own work. Though "Paradise Lost" is a dilation on a moment in Genesis, it contains passages so personal that you cannot read far without knowing that the author was a blind man fallen on "evil days." Even in his political prose, Milton will pause to tell us that he is really not all that short, despite what his enemies say. Though he coined the name "Pandemonium"—"all the demons"—for the palace that Satan and his fallen crew build in Hell, he also coined the word "self-esteem," as contemporary a concept as there is and one that governed much of Milton's life.

This year is the four-hundredth anniversary of Milton's birth, and there are a host of Milton books to mark the occasion: the Modern Library has brought out "The Complete Poetry and Essential Prose," edited by William Kerrigan, John Rumrich, and Stephen M. Fallon, and not long ago Oxford University Press published an edition of "Paradise Lost" introduced by Philip Pullman, whose young-adult trilogy "His Dark Materials" draws its title and much of its mythic energy from "Paradise Lost." (Titles involving sight and blindness often come from Milton: "Look Homeward, Angel," "Eyeless in Gaza," "Darkness at Noon," "Darkness Visible.") There is a new edition of "Paradise Lost" edited by the scholar Barbara Lewalski, whose monumental biography of the poet came out a few years ago, and Oxford is launching an eleven-volume series of all Milton's works, edited by Thomas Corns and Gordon Campbell. Corns and Campbell are also jointly publishing a biography of Milton in time for the birthday, later this year, and Corns is editing "The Milton Encyclopedia," for Yale University Press. A new critical study by the Princeton scholar Nigel Smith bears the provocative title "Is Milton Better Than Shakespeare?," and there has been a recent spate of books with titles like "Why Milton Matters" and "Milton in Popular Culture," pointing out Milton's influence on everyone from Malcolm X, who read "Paradise Lost" in prison and identified with Satan, to Helen Keller, who created the John Milton Society for the Blind. "Milton in Popular Culture" reminds the reader that in the movie "Animal House," Donald Suther-

John Milton was born on December 9, 1608, in London. His father was a scrivener, a job that went beyond the drawing up of legal documents and included moneylending, which he apparently did with such success that his son did not actually have to work for a living. As a boy, Milton was so studious that, he later recalled, from his twelfth birthday on "scarcely ever did I leave my studies for my bed before the hour of midnight"—thus laying the foundation for vast erudition and eventual blindness. Alongside the usual Latin and Greek, Milton received instruction in French, Italian, and Hebrew, and perhaps even Aramaic and Syriac. His father, who was a gifted musician known for his psalm arrangements, also made sure that his son had a thorough musical education.

When Milton was sixteen, he started at Christ's College, Cambridge, where he excelled at composing Latin verse and earned the nickname the Lady of Christ's, because of his delicate looks and chastity—though he also later boasted that as a young man he was seldom without a sword and could beat many stronger men at fencing. After seven years at Cambridge, Milton retreated to his father's house in the countryside for five more years of isolated, self-directed study. By the end of this time, he had produced a



Milton's Satan is charismatic, but Milton consistently shows his cause to be unjust.

EDWARD SOREL

handful of lasting poems, including the great elegy "Lycidas," occasioned by the drowning death of a college friend.

"Lycidas," like much of Milton's longer poetry, takes a nugget of actual narrative—the friend's shipwreck—and blows it up to allegorical proportions with elaborate allusions, classical forms, a concern for immortality both poetic and spiritual, and even a digressive attack on greedy bishops. But if the allusions escape contemporary readers, and we're never quite sure why his friend Edward is called Lycidas, there is a deep music that sweeps over the reader like the drowning sea at the heart of the poem: "Look homeward angel now, and melt with ruth. / And, O ye dolphins, waft the hapless youth." In the end, the poem manages to enact the stages of mourning for a body lost at sea, and to achieve a resolution of psalmlike authority and Christian consolation, fused with unexpected emotional immediacy:

> Weep no more, woeful shepherds, weep
>   no more,
> For Lycidas your sorrow is not dead,
> Sunk though he be beneath the wat'ry
>   floor.

In 1638, the year "Lycidas" was published, Milton—still essentially unknown but with a fixed notion of future greatness—sailed for Europe. It was on this trip that he had his encounter with Galileo, but he also came into contact with the lush beauty of Italian Renaissance art, and the homeland of Virgil and Dante further inspired his epic ambitions. The trip was fraught with Miltonian paradox: at a time when his Puritan sympathies were growing, he steeped himself in Catholic art, depictions of the human form, and the languorous Mediterranean climate. Returning to England the next year, he was increasingly drawn into the religious struggles that would erupt openly in 1642 in the English Civil Wars.

It is difficult for a modern reader to parse the intertwined worlds of politics and religion that Milton inhabited and that led to those wars. His father had been disinherited for rejecting the family's Catholic faith in favor of Protestantism, but, in England, where Henry VIII had brought about the Protestant Reformation, in the fifteen-thirties, for the purpose of remarrying, the lines between faith, political conviction, and personal expediency were particularly thin. By Milton's time, further schisms had emerged. With Charles I at its head, Anglican Protestantism became increasingly ceremonial and High Church, spreading fear of Papist resurgence and increasing the power of certain key bishops. Milton, like many of his contemporaries, moved toward Puritanism, attracted by its idea that the Bible was the ultimate authority and trumped all institutional hierarchies. Milton was particularly well equipped to follow this line. He could read the Hebrew Bible in the original and had absorbed aspects of rabbinic culture; indeed, his Hebraism helped radicalize his Christian beliefs.

For Milton, the rupture of the Civil Wars coincided with a more personal strife. In June, 1642, he married Mary Powell, the daughter of an Oxfordshire squire who owed Milton money, but just a few months after the wedding she left Milton's house to return to her parents. Mary was only seventeen (Milton was thirty-three), and it is unclear whether she was sent away or ran off. But soon after her departure—she was absent for three years—Milton wrote a treatise advocating divorce, which, characteristically, was both an idealistic cry for personal liberty and an act of self-justification. Milton based much of his argument on a reading of Deuteronomy, but although the Bible was always his argumentative cornerstone, he was far from being a fundamentalist. In 1644, he published "Areopagitica," his defense of free speech, declaring that truth—which he compares to the broken body of Osiris, in Egyptian myth—can never be wholly known on earth until the Second Coming of the Messiah; we therefore must all search for truth in every way we can, which means not censoring the press. For Milton, the great trial of life was to discover truth through error, but without falling off the path of good. His oratorical vigor balances divine purpose and individual autonomy, and he displays an optimism that, in its mixture of manliness and statecraft, sounds like a speech by Teddy Roosevelt:

> I cannot praise a fugitive and cloistered virtue, unexercised and unbreathed, that never sallies out and sees her adversary, but slinks out of the race where that immortal garland is to be run for, not without dust and heat. . . . That which purifies us is trial, and trial is by what is contrary.

What was for many a time of terrifying anarchy—this was, after all, the world that produced Hobbes's "Leviathan"—was for Milton a great religious reckoning. In common with many radical Protestant groups, he saw the idea of a relationship to God unmediated by ecclesiastical authority as a justification for beheading the titular head of the Anglican Church, Charles I. It was defending the regicide of 1649 in a pamphlet called "The Tenure of Kings and Magistrates" that helped bring Milton to the attention of Oliver Cromwell. He was appointed Secretary for Foreign Tongues soon afterward.

Milton served the Commonwealth as a translator, polemicist, and all-around house intellectual. He claimed that the writing of his long pamphlets in defense of the new government cost him his eyesight. (His enemies claimed it was divine retribution.) Though he did continue to write some poetry—such as the moving sonnet on his blindness, "When I consider how my light is spent"—he laid aside plans for the grand epic he had long contemplated in favor of his political work, which he saw as religious service. Milton genuinely thought he was helping to fashion the Kingdom of God on earth, and—hard as this has proved for a later, secular age to understand—he was someone who would rather live there than write a poem about it.

This may also explain why he continued to serve the state even when Cromwell dissolved Parliament, in 1653, giving way to the autocracy of the Protectorate, in which Cromwell assumed virtually kinglike powers. Even after Cromwell's death, in 1658, when his son Richard succeeded him, Milton remained loyal to the cause, though with increasing ambivalence. Soon, the Army removed Richard from power; the monarchy was restored with Charles II's accession to the throne, in 1660.

During the Restoration, despite a broad act of amnesty, those who had abetted and defended the killing of Charles I were hanged, drawn, and quartered. Several of Milton's friends and associates suffered this grisly fate, and he might have as well, had it not been for the intervention of high-placed friends like Andrew Marvell. Even then, Milton spent time in the Tower of London and lived with the fear that he might be killed in retaliation for his scathing attacks on those who resisted the Cromwellian tide.

"Ooh, we're sooo impressed."

It was in this climate that Milton began writing "Paradise Lost." The poem's cast of characters—Adam, Eve, Satan, God, and the Son of God (not the same thing, for Milton, as God)—says something about Milton's ripening literary ambition and about his dwindling faith in political resolutions. Through the preceding years, Milton had suffered a number of personal disasters: in 1652, his wife Mary died in childbirth, and a son died the following month. In 1658, his second wife, whom he had married two years before, died as well, followed a month after that by their daughter. Furthermore, in the year of Mary's death Milton's blindness became total, a fact that informs the tone and texture of "Paradise Lost," as does the total collapse of his political-theological hopes.

Milton had carried his epic around inside him for many years, and any number of calamities—including the outbreak of bubonic plague from 1664 to 1665, which killed seventy-five thousand Londoners—might have prevented him from getting it all down on paper. Its very completion must have seemed like divine Providence to Milton. Even while writing it, he believed that he shared a muse with Moses and King David and that she visited him nightly in his dreams; he woke up and dictated his poem in seemingly preformed stanzas. The palpable exhilaration of the poem's composition, and the heavy burden of its complex meanings, contributes to the thrilling tension of "Paradise Lost."

Milton's burning question, how things could have gone so wrong in human affairs, is carried back to the moment when "our first parents" ate the apple and brought "death into the world, and all our woe." (It is part of the poem's power that the reader is implicated in the story—"our" parents, "our" woe.) But Milton is carried back further than Adam and Eve. Doled out in the course of the epic, as tales within tales, is the narrative of Lucifer, the highest in a vast hierarchy of angels, who grows jealous at the promotion of God's son to the position of Messiah. He organizes a revolt, loses, and is thrown with his many followers into Hell. The ecstatic descriptions of Satan's fall, great fire-breathing phrases with the sinews of a dragon, exhibit Milton's rhetorical power to the full:

> Hurled headlong flaming from th' ethereal sky
> With hideous ruin and combustion down
> To bottomless perdition, there to dwell
> In adamantine chains and penal fire,
> Who durst defy th' Omnipotent to arms.

To make up for the angelic absence, God creates earth and Eden and Adam and Eve. Satan, having heard of this spot, decides to conquer it, by cunning, for himself and his devils.

The fact that the devils in "Paradise Lost" are failed revolutionaries gives the poem a weird undertow, in light of Milton's support of the regicide. There is great pathos, for instance, when Satan encounters one of his followers disfigured by the fall:

> If thou beest he; but O how fall'n! How changed
> From him, who in the happy realms of light
> Clothed with transcendent brightness didst outshine
> Myriads though bright.

The loss of place and power is felt in the most immediate and personal way. Probably the most famous remark about "Paradise Lost" is William Blake's judgment that Milton was "of the Devil's party without knowing it," and since the Romantics many critics have sought to save Satan's soul by making his evil a form of Promethean good. But although Milton's Satan is charismatic—and his God, as even ardent Miltonists tend to accept, dull in the extreme—Milton adroitly climbs out of this theological hole and shows Satan's cause to be unjust. Milton supported the execution of a mortal king, but Satan is rebelling against the Creator of the Universe, a position that forces him to deny that he was even created by God and to tell his followers, "We know no time when we were not as now." Besides, Satan is completely miserable, body and soul, and he slinks away in the most ignominious fashion after seducing Eve.

Those who trumpet Satan's glory often neglect the nobility of his adversaries, most memorably a low-ranking angel who finds Satan disguised in Eden and touches him with a spear. Instantly, Satan springs up in his actual form, since angelic touch reveals his true nature. Satan is horrified to discover that his own fall has transfigured him so that he is no longer recognizable as Lucifer; he stands "abashed" and, contemplating this junior angel, "felt how awful goodness is." That sense of the awfulness of goodness (the word, in its seventeenth-century usage, means "awe-inspiring") was as powerful an engine of Milton's work as the glamour of evil.

Of course, the clash of opposing forces brought out great poetry in Milton; there is sheer delight in the face-off between Satan and Gabriel, the warrior angel charged with keeping Eden safe (a job he does very badly, it is worth noting). The trash-talking between these two rises to glorious heights. Gabriel threatens:

> If from this hour
> Within these hallowed limits thou appear,
> Back to th' infernal pit I drag thee chained.

Satan, unimpressed, responds:

> Then when I am thy captive talk of chains,
> Proud limitary Cherub, but ere then
> Far heavier load thy self expect to feel
> From my prevailing arm.

For all the angelic, divine, and infernal fireworks, though, it is with mankind that Milton's sympathies lie. We first meet Adam and Eve holding hands in the garden, and we see them last holding hands and striking out together into a fallen world. They are constantly changing, constantly evolving even before their fall. My favorite of all the recent Milton books, Margaret Olofson Thickstun's "Milton's Paradise Lost: Moral Education," points out how occupied with teaching and learning everyone—except Satan—is. (Milton's only real job, before his role as Secretary for

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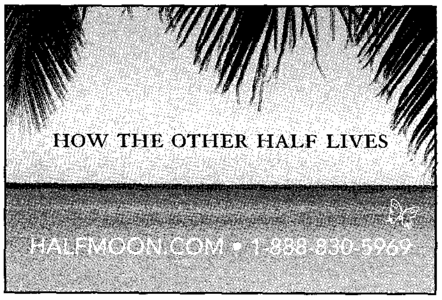

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Foreign Tongues, was as a teacher and tutor.) The author draws on her own experience as a parent and teacher to emphasize the earthy humbleness that anchors this loftiest of poems. Milton may have set out to "justify the ways of God to men," but he was a deep defender of human dignity. God notes that he has made Adam and Eve "sufficient to have stood, though free to fall." That freedom was paramount to Milton, who departed from mainstream Puritanism in rejecting the idea of predestination. Free will, divinely given, is a glory, but every parent knows the pain of letting go, and it is remarkable how much this book about "our first parents" is itself about parenting—though Milton was, by all accounts, a dreadful parent.

The concept of freedom is also crucial in the relationship between Adam and Eve. They argue when Eve wants to go off alone: Adam, warned about Satan, wants her close, but Eve counters by pointing out that unless she has freedom to do wrong she can't be virtuous ("What is faith, love, virtue unassayed?"). Adam, who is technically Eve's parent as well as partner, having given up a rib for her creation, assents, praising her virtue and logic. The fact that she is right but then succumbs to temptation is part of the hard knowledge that lay at the heart of Milton's notion of freedom.

Milton's treatment of women has not traditionally won him the admiration of feminists—Virginia Woolf called him "the first of the masculinists," thinking perhaps of the contrasting description of Adam and Eve: "For contemplation he and valour formed / For softness she and sweet attractive grace." Adam is upright and strong, Eve is like a vine that needs to cling. (Emily Dickinson referred to Milton as "the great florist.") But there have lately been a number of feminist readings of Milton, and though they can't explain away that primal inequality, certainly they have a lot to point to, such as Eve's argument for independence in Eden.

Milton may not have been much of a husband, but it is the love between Adam and Eve that makes the fall endurable. I was first turned toward Milton years ago, in a required freshman English class, when the teacher—a reserved young man who had been born in China—suddenly read aloud to us Adam's words to Eve after he has made the decision to eat the apple and fall with her. At this point in the poem, it is unclear to Adam and Eve whether or not she will live, but Adam decides that he would rather die with her than live alone: "To lose thee were to lose myself." Adam's decision to eat the apple is complicated—he might have interceded for Eve had he not fallen, too—but there is no undoing the beauty of his speech, and the teacher told us, in a voice thick with emotion, that he had just recited these words to his own bride:

> How can I live without you, how forgo
> Thy sweet converse and love so dearly
> joined,
> To live again in these wild woods
> forlorn?
> Should God create another Eve, and I
> Another rib afford, yet loss of thee
> Would never from my heart.

Adam is rescued from despair after the fall by his love for Eve and by her fortitude and love for him. In a sense, they rescue each other.

"Paradise Lost" was published in 1667, though Milton, after completing "Paradise Regained" and "Samson Agonistes," revised it into its final form in 1674. Milton did many things with "Paradise Lost": he revived and then killed off the classical epic, he made his personal theology into literary scripture, he fused the Hebrew Bible and the New Testament, making the Son present at the creation. "Paradise Lost" is simultaneously personal, national, and universal, a poem that claims divine inspiration but is clearly made up, a poem with ancient origins and contemporary interpolations that confuses the very notion of old and new. A number of recent scholars who have focussed on Milton's knowledge of Hebrew see echoes in his literary strategy of rabbinic Midrash, human stories that helped embody divine meaning and in the process became divine themselves.

In America, where God and the Devil live alongside Western rationalism, Milton seems right at home. After the attacks of September 11th, it was possible to find Milton invoked to remind us of the nature of absolute evil—his Satan really is a model terrorist, who, having abandoned hope of a happy home, devotes his energy to destroying the lives of others—and at the same time quoted to uphold the rights of individuals whose distasteful views might be curtailed during a time of war. Milton's spirit, mingling prophetic zealotry with a sort of pragmatic humanism, is thoroughly woven into the fabric of American life. Like other disappointed Puritans, Milton might easily have sailed for the literal New World, but he instead settled for an imaginary one that was to exert a strong influence on America's Founding Fathers. (In Thomas Jefferson's literary commonplace book, Milton appears more than any other poet.) He shares traits both with the first theocratic European settlers and with the Enlightenment figures of a century later, combining an urge for Biblical fulfillment with an urge for radical new beginnings.

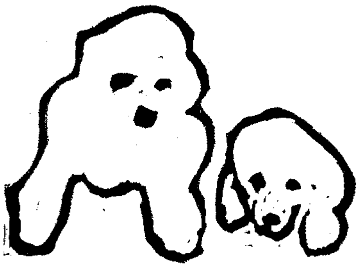
Milton died shortly after completing his revision of "Paradise Lost," in 1674, and was buried in the church of St. Giles Cripplegate, in London. In 1790, during a renovation of the church, the grave was dug up, because church elders wanted to pinpoint the exact burial spot so they could erect a monument. The coffin was located and left lying deep in the ground. The next day, a group of curious local men, including a churchwarden, a publican, and a pawnbroker, after a "merry-meeting," hauled it out of the ground. They prized back the leaden lid, and, carried away by ghoulish irreverent devotion, or simple greed, knocked out Milton's teeth for souvenirs. They grabbed hanks of his hair, which he had worn down to his shoulders, like Adam, and which came away easily, and snatched what bones they could from under the shroud.

The next day, a gravedigger named Elizabeth Grant, with the aid of workmen who kept the church doors barred to all but those willing to pay the price of a pot of beer, put the remains on display. Order was eventually restored, but the news shocked the country—the poet Cowper wrote a poem about the desecration. Milton was reburied, but, like the torn figure of Osiris in "Areopagitica," he was incomplete. Still, a man named Philip Neve, who wrote an account of what happened after interviewing the participants, managed to buy up whatever "relics" he could and return them to the coffin before reinterment. Most hauntingly, perhaps, he had managed to recover a rib. ♦

BRIEFLY NOTED

We Are Now Beginning Our Descent, *by James Meek (Canongate; $24).* Adam Kellas is a shambolic Scottish thirty-something loser, unlucky in love and prone to inappropriate temper tantrums, who becomes a war correspondent, because he "wasn't brave enough to be thought a coward." When he is sent to Afghanistan to report on the American invasion in 2001, he rediscovers his sensitive side and falls in love with a tough, deer-hunting American named Astrid. Together, the two dodge "broccoli-shaped" bombs and negotiate the moral minefield of war reportage in a country so broken that "even the furniture had prostheses." The characters and the setup may be a little overdrawn, but it's easy to forgive the excess when Meek exhibits such a knowing sense of humor about it all: in a typically audacious move on the author's part, his protagonist is working on a novel within the novel, a thriller that promises action and adventure in abundance.

The Answer Is Always Yes, *by Monica Ferrell (Dial; $24).* In Ferrell's début novel, Matthew Acciaccatura, a bullied nerd from Teaneck, New Jersey, in his freshman year at N.Y.U. and hungry to be cool, is spotted by a Manhattan night-club owner and given the chance to become a promoter. Ferrell chronicles Matt's ascent in the nineties rave culture and his downfall—brought about by his need, when he is faced with someone who symbolizes his childhood torturers, "to deal a blow here for all loserkind." Ferrell's descriptions veer from the exquisite (a lover's shoulders are "live stones in your palms") to the questionable ("He fell against the enchanted delta of her pelvis"). Her inclusion of a "Pale Fire"-like commentary by a German sociologist seems unnecessary, given the ease with which her exuberant narration evokes her likable protagonist's world.



Sitting Bull, *by Bill Yenne (Westholme; $29.95).* In the early eighteen-seventies, General Philip Sheridan, preparing to move into the Black Hills, in blatant violation of the Treaty of Fort Laramie, began hearing about an Indian named Sitting Bull. The stories, vague and portentous, caused Sheridan to wonder, Yenne writes, whether Sitting Bull was "a real person, or merely an allegory." Sitting Bull became "the most famous of American Indians," vilified as the "murderer of Custer" and romanticized as the greatest chief of the Plains. Yenne's book excels as a study in leadership, showing how Sitting Bull's position in Lakota society has been misapprehended—he was not, at Little Bighorn or elsewhere, the top military commander or chief of chiefs but something closer to a charismatic shaman. Sitting Bull was also a celebrity, who sold autographs and had a surprisingly dignified turn in Buffalo Bill's Wild West show. After his disputed death—he was either shot while resisting arrest or murdered—his cabin was transported to Chicago for the 1893 World's Fair.

Apples and Oranges, *by Marie Brenner (Farrar, Straus & Giroux; $24).* In this elegiac memoir, the author, a reporter, applies the same investigative skills that led to her exposés of the tobacco industry and Enron to a more intimate subject: her contentious relationship with her late brother, Carl. From an eccentric Jewish Texan family of compulsive record keepers—their father maintained a four-page list of his life's achievements—Marie became a New York liberal, Carl a die-hard conservative who abandoned a legal career to farm apples. As a teen-ager, he smashed his sister's Joan Baez records; as an adult, given a diagnosis of terminal cancer, he informed her via FedEx. Her attempts to smooth over their differences by mastering the language of fruit (Carl often started conversations, "I am going to give you a quiz") are at once comic and tinged with regret.

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POP MUSIC

USHER 2.0

One of the last big pop stars tries adulthood.

BY SASHA FRERE-JONES

Usher's 2004 album, "Confessions," which has sold nine and a half million copies, may turn out to have been the last true blockbuster in pop music. Since 2000, only five albums have sold more copies. "Confessions" sold 1.1 million in its first week, and contained four No. 1 singles. For a while, "Confessions" *was* pop music. Nine and a half million was a big number even in 2004; now, in a music market whose rules are changing by the day, it's the new eleventy billion.

Usher was brought up to succeed in pop music the way some kids are brought up to compete in the Olympics—very different from an artist stumbling on his own voice by dint of involuntary, obsessive experiment. Everything about his output seems to have come from a focus group, including his abdominal muscles. Brought to Atlanta from Chattanooga by his manager-mother, Jonetta Patton, he was signed at the age of fourteen and ended up in New York as the youngest member of the entertainment battalion led by Sean Combs. He started releasing records at fifteen, and though he is filed first as an R.&B. artist, he is equally well known for singing feathery ballads that fit into the genre inaccurately named Adult Contemporary. His songs balance on a moral and formal fulcrum: salacious stories and club beats over here, vows to reform and slow, throaty singing over there. It's the Saturday-night, Sunday-morning dichotomy. His records are fun the way pop music is fun; they share the same contours, priorities, and boundaries. The pleasures are rarely raw, surprising, or complex, but they are reliable, and there is an easy glow in the sureness of the execution. A reasonably attractive, small man with very little body fat, he is a nimble but anonymous singer and a fantastically crisp, even fussy, dancer.

Usher's songs strive for as wide a demographic as possible, and his personal story—as recounted endlessly in entertainment magazines—hews to whatever product he is currently hawking. His memories are market-based. Speaking to a reporter in 2004 about his friend David Beckham, Usher said, "He's great at what he does. His P.R. is great," as if the two might be indistinguishable. When confronted, in the same interview, with rumors that Beckham had possibly cheated on his wife, Usher responded, "He's cheating on her? That happens, man. Every-

No catharsis here: Usher has stripped out the pain audible in the work of so many great male soul singers.

NORMAN JEAN ROY/LAFACE

body's confessing nowadays," deftly converting what might be upsetting news about a close friend into a promotional reference to his then new album. In the course of "Confessions," Usher sang about both infidelity and fathering an illegitimate child. (In interviews, he denies the latter.)

As music, "Confessions" was a diverting, glossy series of apologies and whispery shouts. (Usher's voice is seamless and coherent even when he empties his lungs.) The album presented a sinner who didn't seem particularly upset by his own sins. Its first single, "Yeah!," was an uncomplicated song about flirting with girls in a night club; it left plenty of air-conditioned space for Usher to coo and for the producer Lil Jon to bark the interjections ("O.K.!," "Yeah!") that earned him a parody on "Chappelle's Show." The lyrics were delivered like flashes of light: brief, anxious, and exciting, and perfectly suited to a voice that is long on control and short on texture. Texture, and a welcome dose of humor, came from the rapper Ludacris, who turned "birthday suit"—slang your grandmother could use—into a filthy hoot. To stay at No. 1 for twelve weeks, as "Yeah!" did, you must sound salacious but not dirty, and keep it simple enough to lure out the non-dancers, who can latch on to a phrase or word that they already know: yeah!

"Confessions Part II," also a No. 1 single, was another instance of Usher's knack for taking potentially convulsive themes—sex, infidelity, guilt, telephone calls—and reducing them to titillation. It was Usher in his quieter mode, though the song's beat is like the spare thump of "Yeah!" slowed down and reduced in size, wisely suspended between the dance floor and the couch. Usher narrated the act of confessing, singing about "racing" to tell his girlfriend that not only did he cheat on her (that was Part I) but he fathered a child with the "chick on the side." Lightness is Usher's main, and perhaps only, gift. "Confessions Part II" was "One Life to Live," not "Scenes from a Marriage," and that may explain those nine and a half million records. If Usher is considered part of soul and R. & B., he is a quiet revolutionary, stripping out the pain audible in the work of so many great male soul singers: Otis Redding, Michael Jackson, Luther Vandross, R. Kelly. Catharsis has no place in Usher's work, no matter the topic. The blood is all offstage, and Usher plays our Greek chorus, moralizing and reporting. It's an easier gig than having to do the wet work. (R. & B. after "Confessions" has continued in this denatured, slight vein, from the cyborg come-ons of Ciara to Chris Brown's Usher-lite routine.)

Usher's new album, "Here I Stand," is the work of a newlywed. The challenge here is to convince us that he is a married and responsible man—grown and sexy, as R. & B. for people over thirty has come to be called—without sacrificing the louche, frictionless sense of play that made him famous. Now the singer whose catalogue is based on cheating, flirting, breaking up, and apologizing is forced to stay in place, to rhyme with his press kit, and the dissonance undoes his modest gifts.

The much publicized backstory this time is about Usher's marriage to his longtime friend and stylist, Tameka Foster, seven years his senior. The controversy, mild as it is, is Usher's firing of his mother as manager. ("I resigned her.") The first single, "Love in This Club," nods to "Yeah!" and achieves Usher's formal dream: it is exactly half ballad, half club track. The producer Polow Da Don creates a stuttering series of keyboards that mimic the flashing of strobe lights (and the keyboards from Justin Timberlake's "My Love"), and pairs them with a slow, undemonstrative beat. Is it a slow dance? A brag? There's a rapper on it—Atlanta's Young Jeezy—and the subject matter is as racy as an old Usher song. Usher is so excited about his partner that he wants to have sex right there in the club, and he "don't care who's watching." The problem is that the song's smoothness doesn't match the nastiness of Usher's proposals. Dance clubs smell like bubblegum and cheap perfume, and the last place you'd want to put exposed skin is "on the floor." Usher has the come-on, but the scenario is dopey. Invite her back to your jet, or make a date to meet in Ibiza—you know how to do this. Someone genuinely gruff and sexually threatening could pull the song off. Not Usher.

The dissonance gets acute. "This Ain't Sex" is a relaxed, mid-tempo song that glosses the live funk of "Off the Wall," by Michael Jackson (a figure who always looms over Usher). The material is Usher's wheelhouse, a finger-snapper filled with creamy background vocals which implies that nothing remotely meaningful will interrupt the good times. The chorus, though, hammers home the idea that, for Usher 2.0, even thrills come with good intentions: "We ain't having sex, we're making moments that will outlast the world! And this ain't sex, this is a symbol of the true makings of love!" Why not throw in college credit?

Usher must know that, even as a father and husband, he needs to maintain the threat of an unmanageable libido, and so we get "Appetite," a spectacularly awkward attempt to fuse the old Usher and the new. "Appetite" is like an algorithmic combination of Usher's career highlights compressed into one song. "Yeah man, true story," Usher says as the song begins, to remind anyone who had forgotten that his records and his life are one big bundle of choreographed content. "Wifey home, wedding band, I'm a lucky man, you'd think I'd be satisfied, and truthfully, yes I am." There's a problem, though: Usher has a "Mac in my backpack" and is "surfing all the sites," worried about the line between "chatting" and "cheating." So this time he's almost going to stray and then he'll restrain himself. The tie-in to "Confessions" is right there in the first line of the chorus: "Tempted, I must confess, but I better not make a mess." The production, by Danja, wastes a genuinely menacing combination of drums and flutes on yet another unconvincing scenario. We are supposed to believe that Usher is walking around with a laptop, taking women's business cards and renting cars. Is he going to plop down in a Starbucks and start flipping through MySpace pages? Doesn't Usher have a manservant or three to handle all this stuff? ♦

NEWYORKER.COM
Sasha Frere-Jones's pop-music blog.

THE THEATRE

MEN AT WORK

Conor McPherson on the Irish male.

BY HILTON ALS

For the male characters in "The Weir," Conor McPherson's 1997 comedic drama, the spirit world is readily accessible, especially after the consumption of spirits. In a tavern in rural Ireland, a young barman serves lager and whiskey to three down-on-their-luck working-class locals. Jack, the oldest of the men, has never really had any kind of companion, while Jim, his fortyish friend, still lives with his mother. That leaves Finbar, who has made it both with the ladies and as a landowner, but neither success seems to have calmed his barely acknowledged anxiety. Finbar is energized by booze—he orders drink after drink and talks and talks. Still, "alcoholism" is not a word that any of these men would use. Drinking puts hair on your chest and a tale on your tongue. And McPherson finds music in their discussion of it: "Ah. Pint. Why not, says you, ha?" "Keep the chill out, ha?"

As an examination of Ireland's drinking and storytelling culture, "The Weir" couldn't be better, structurally speaking: the men's funny banter acts as a bridge between long monologues. To impress Valerie, a friend of Finbar's (amusingly, she orders a glass of white wine at the bar, thus establishing her sexual and social difference from the lads), the boys each tell a story of the supernatural, evoking portions of Yeats's "A Vision" or the more mystical elements in Isak Dinesen's "Seven Gothic Tales." But when Valerie reveals the real-life circumstances of her grief—her only child died in a swimming accident—fact trumps fiction and silences these depressed fabulists. McPherson is following in the dramaturgical footsteps of the Irish-American Eugene O'Neill here. In "The Iceman Cometh," as in "The Weir," a bunch of barflies watch their pipe dreams go up in smoke as they're exposed to the air of truth.

McPherson was born in Dublin in 1971. As an undergraduate at University College, Dublin, he studied English and philosophy and dabbled in theatre. His first plays were later performed around Dublin, and concentrated on the dramatic monologue. "I love the intimacy of somebody just confiding directly with you," he once said. Monologues can be tricky, though. When they are masterly—as in the "Homebody" section of Tony Kushner's 2001 play, "Homebody/Kabul," for instance—it is the result of the writer's ability to do two things at once. First, he must not let the character engage in the kind of navel-gazing that excludes the rest of the world—he must provide a political point of view for us to hold on to or disagree with. Second, he has to round out the monologue with enough self-critical humor that the speaker doesn't immediately alienate the audience. When I first saw McPherson's work—his 2000 melodrama, "Dublin Carol"—I failed to understand how germane the structure of his plays was to being Irish, Catholic, and male. I got a better glimpse of those undercurrents in "Shining City" (2004), the story of a closeted gay shrink and his patient who is haunted by his dead wife's ghost. With "Port Authority" (at the Atlantic Theatre Company, under the direction of Henry Wishcamper), McPherson's ambition has become even clearer. He wants to tell stories that are metaphysical in scope. He wants to explore how much the Irish soul can bear in its native land, where alcohol blunts the senses and religion ruins lives.

The set, designed by Takeshi Kata, is simple: a long, high-backed bench in an eerily empty bus station. Three passengers are waiting, seemingly unattached. First up is Kevin (John Gallagher, Jr.), the youngest of the trio, then the middle-aged Dermot (Brian d'Arcy James), followed by Joe (Jim Norton), who lives in an old-age home. At the start of the play, Kevin addresses the audience, telling us that he has left home and is moving into a house with three roommates, one of whom is in a band. But the roommate that Kevin can't wait to live with is Clare, who is not only the object of his desire but a conduit for his feelings about love and life in general. After he sits down, Dermot gets up. With his thick mustache, wide chest, and cheap jacket, Dermot looks like a rough-and-ready Oliver Reed. Almost at once, he projects his insecurities and resentments. He has started a new job with a financial firm—a step up in employment and salary. But his life doesn't reflect his change in status. He's still married to Mary, who lies on the couch watching "EastEnders" and cares little about Dermot's aspirations.

Joe speaks next. He has lost his wife, Liz. And it's in his monologues that McPherson's skill feels freshest and most expansive. Recounting his life with Liz, Joe says:

> I was always just like everybody else. . . .
> You saw me with a bunch of people, you wouldn't notice me.
> I never thought about myself . . .
> I met my wife, Liz, when I was working up in Cadbury's.
> I was older than her and I'd sort of risen up the ranks a bit by then and she was working on the floor . . .
> But I always had my eye on her. Don't know why.
> She had thick little legs. She was small and a bit . . . busty I suppose . . .
> And Liz was basically a smasher in many ways.
> Always laughing. Always in good form.
> If there was an awkward silence, she just hummed to herself.
> Do you get me?
> She was like me.
> There was nothing neither wrong nor right about her.

Like Joe, Dermot and Kevin find themselves—or, more accurately, can see themselves—only through their relationships with women. While Dermot is attracted to his boss's wife, he's cowed by her generosity toward him—class differences prohibit it. And that's the drama here: how far can love carry you before the old fears reduce you to that small boy, trembling, neglected, in a corner?

Through the ninety intermissionless minutes of "Port Authority," the characters rotate, two sitting while the third speaks. This roundelay keeps the audience interested, but certain details are lost in the shift from one perspective to another. For instance, it wasn't clear to me until the end of the play that Kevin was Joe's grandson, and that Dermot used to be with Joe's daughter. Was this inten-

John Gallagher, Jr., Jim Norton, and Brian d'Arcy James in "Port Authority." Photograph by Michal Chelbin.

tional—a way of showing the characters' isolation in a culture where men aren't expected to express their feelings? It's difficult to say. The payoff of the play is less in its action than in the secrets shared. Recalling his grandmother's funeral, Kevin says:

> And I was sitting there . . . watching my granddad holding these rosary beads that had belonged to her, that she'd got from Lourdes.
>
> And I was *thinking* that maybe there isn't a soul for every person in the world.
>
> Maybe there's just two.
>
> One for people who go with the flow, and one for all the people who fight.
>
> Maybe lots of us share a soul.
>
> So there's no judgement, because there's no point.
>
> It was just this stupid idea.

As he often does, McPherson has his character dismiss his own lyricism ("It was just this stupid idea"). He seems uncomfortable allowing his creations to feel directly, explicitly. That's what makes the play's ending so remarkable, and a huge advance for McPherson. For a moment, he gives up his struggle with his characters' machismo and misery, and lets Joe confront his emotions straight on, speaking for himself, rather than through the supernatural. Joe was in love with his neighbor's wife, Marion, and once tried to steal a photograph of her (which she later passed along to him):

> So I just lay back with Marion's picture in one hand and Liz's rosary beads in the other.
>
> Thinking about regret and worry.
>
> And how when you get to my age, you give up on them because they don't help anything.
>
> And you generally get tired of regret.
>
> And you're usually just whacked out from worrying.
>
> So I brought these two things together on my chest.
>
> The picture and the beads.
>
> On my heart if you like.
>
> And I did what any Christian would do.
>
> I turned out the light and I went to sleep. ♦

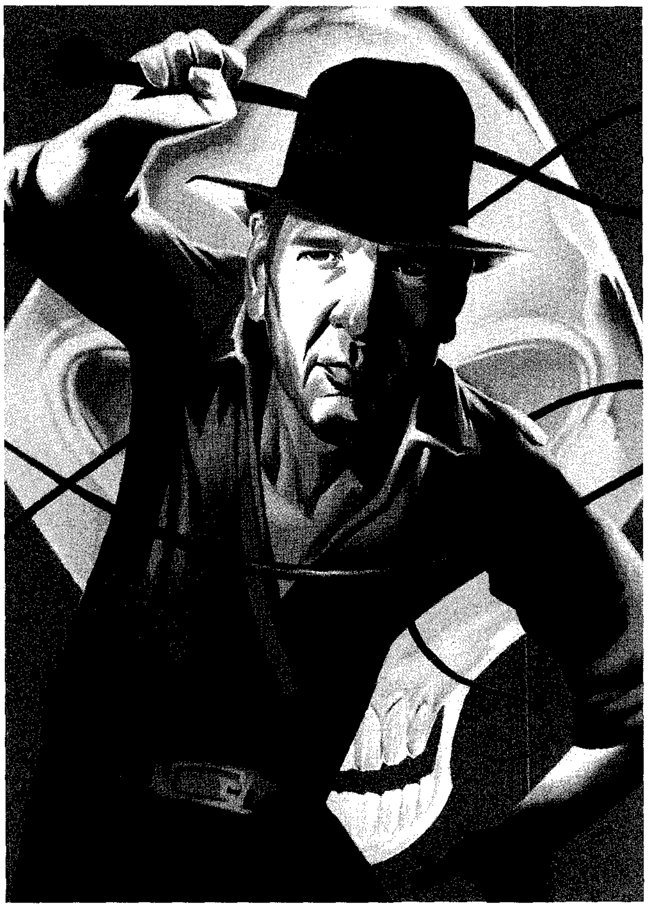
THE CURRENT CINEMA

INDY CHARTS

The return of Indiana Jones.

BY DAVID DENBY

In 1989, when Sean Connery showed up in the third Indiana Jones movie, as Indiana's father, Henry Jones, he was no longer a young man. But Connery, then fifty-nine, had relaxed beautifully into middle age. Playing alongside Harrison Ford's Indy, he was crotchety yet formidable. The father was a medievalist, the son an archeology professor. Both were obsessed with lost treasures of unimaginable worth and extraordinary powers, and Connery turned a rivalry with the younger actor into high-style mischief. Nineteen years later, in the fourth movie in the series, "Indiana Jones and the Kingdom of the Crystal Skull," Ford, now sixty-five, is still playing Indy, but he can't be described as a man relaxing into middle age. He's in great shape physically, but he doesn't seem happy. He's tense and glaring, and he speaks his lines with more emphasis than is necessary, like a drunk who wants to appear sober. In the earlier movies, Indy was often surly, but his scowl turned into a rakish smile—he dared you to think he was afraid to do something, and then, before you had quite registered the dare, he raced away and did it. Ford combined swagger with charm, and he was quick; he moved as if he had steel springs in his legs. He rolls and jumps well enough in "Crystal Skull," but his hostile unease in some of the dialogue passages is a real killjoy. And it doesn't help that the screenwriter, David Koepp, who also worked with Steven Spielberg—the director of all the Indiana Jones movies—on the "Jurassic Park" series and "War of the Worlds," isn't good at the kind of arrogant banter that was so large a part of the earlier films. In "Crystal Skull," Indy keeps his whip mostly furled, and his words don't snap, either.



Harrison Ford in the fourth movie of the series.

On balance, it was a mistake for Spielberg and George Lucas (who dreamed up the characters, co-wrote the stories, and produced the series) to revive "Indiana Jones" after so many years. "Crystal Skull" isn't bad—there are a few dazzling sequences, and a couple of good performances—but the unprecedented blend of comedy and action that made the movies so much more fun than any other adventure series is mostly gone. Stretches of this picture are flat, fussy, and dull. Trying to regain the old rapture, you have to grasp at the few scenes that work—most of them at the beginning. The first three films were set in the nineteen-thirties and drew on Art Deco styling in clothes, cars, and aircraft. Spielberg has a taste for sleek modernism, enhanced by a boy's-illustrated-book notion of cool—everything was a little more streamlined and snazzy than life. "Crystal Skull" is set in the nineteen-fifties, and it begins, in Nevada, with the same quintessence of period style. As kids hot-rod across military sites with Elvis on the radio, Spielberg catches the era's uneasy mixture of blandness, latent revolt, and apocalypse, the jukebox-and-pompadour youth culture side by side with nuclear fears.

There is a brilliant, unnervingly funny sequence in which Indy, after escaping some K.G.B. agents (they were trying to steal some of his earlier finds, hoping to use their powers to control America), wanders into a small town with neat wooden houses and square, close-cropped lawns adorned with smiling mannequins of typical American families. Indy enters a house, where "The Howdy Doody Show" blares from a TV. Suddenly, he hears a loudspeaker announce a countdown and realizes that he's about to be nuked in a test blast. In a later sequence, young Shia LaBeouf makes his entrance wearing a black leather jacket and riding a motorcycle—like Marlon Brando in "The Wild One." He's a snarling kid named Mutt, with a thick, frequently combed wave of hair; he calls Indy "Teach," and he needs a father—like James Dean in "Rebel Without a Cause." The K.G.B. agent Irina Spalko, played by Cate Blanchett, takes off from Lotte Lenya's slit-eyed Commie menace in "From Russia with Love." Blanchett wears a full-body flight suit in Soviet gray—drabness turned into fashion by her trim figure—and a rapier hangs from her waist. She enunciates like crazy in Russian-accented English and tilts her cheekbones toward the camera. As is often the case with this actress, she's the best thing in the picture.

One tries hard not to be distracted from any available pleasure by the plot—thickly woven gibberish about the lost

THOMAS FUCHS

Amazonian city of Akator (formerly known as El Dorado), a crystal skull that has been taken from a temple, and a brain-fried archeologist nicknamed Ox (a quavering John Hurt, who is no ox). Sure enough, after a while the movie settles happily into one of those long chases which Spielberg does better than anyone else. The good guys hurtle down a jungle road in an open truck, while Blanchett and her henchmen follow in another truck on a parallel road. The two sides shoot at each other, various people jump, or are flung back and forth, like volleyballs, between the vehicles, and LaBeouf, after a sword fight and a karate match with Blanchett, winds up straddling the trucks and receiving many blows to the crotch from passing branches, before grabbing onto a vine and swinging his way through the jungle. The sequence ends with Indy and friends going over a cliff in their truck. As they fall, they hit a tree sticking out from the cliff wall, which bends slowly downward, like a giant sapling, and deposits them gently in a river below, where the truck turns into a pontoon boat. In a sequence like that, with wild improbabilities linked by speed and rhythm, Spielberg re-creates the spirit of Buster Keaton's most elaborately synchronized gags, but on a much grander scale. (The Spielberg chase has been the subject of an *hommage* on TV's "Family Guy," in which Peter Griffin fights a giant chicken on many moving vehicles.)

The first Indiana Jones movie, "Raiders of the Lost Ark" (1981), had a romping confidence that was electrifying. It was not just an action-adventure movie; it was a spoof of an action-adventure movie, an exuberant parody of the kind of schlock shown at weekend matinées in the fifties—movies about cursed tombs and strange rites and "natives" chanting mumbo-jumbo in studio jungles, or waving swords amid the bazaars of some back-lot Middle East. The stolid hero would gently approach the "love interest," a scientist's daughter. In "Raiders," Karen Allen was the love interest, and, flirting and scrapping with Ford, she had a huge smile and a directly sexual way about her that smashed old cautions. The pattern was set with that film and it varied little in "Indiana Jones and the Temple of Doom" (1984) and "Indiana Jones and the Last Crusade" (1989). At the center of the movies was a search for a buried sacred object (an ark, a stone, a grail) from the ancient world. To prevent the villains from getting hold of it (Nazis in crisp uniforms appeared in two of the pictures; a wild-eyed, blood-sacrificial Thuggee cult in the third), Indy set off from his quiet classroom for some exotic, sun-drenched place, where he would rout thirty excitable men in turbans by using just his fists, a whip, and a revolver. A hard-fighting woman joined his quest, only to prove more difficult to handle than the bad guys. To reach the tomb of the sanctified object, he entered filthy pits and mucky tunnels lined with snakes, tarantulas, scorpions, and rats. He had to be spiritually pure, as well as physically adroit, to get past the swords, spikes, and moving walls that booby-trapped the entrance to the inner chamber. Yet Indy never wanted the sacred object for himself (the relics the K.G.B. were after had been laid away in a warehouse); he usually returned it to its rightful owner or just left it in place. The search was everything; renunciation of the spoils was his purity. As he was leaving the chamber, it collapsed around him, but he escaped.

The movies managed to create a formula and add new surprises at the same time. Working before digital technology eliminated gravity, Spielberg kept his characters on the ground, where he was forced to be inventive. In "Raiders," there was an eccentrically staged, infinitely dangerous fight between Indy and a bare-chested bruiser. As the wings and moving propellers of a partly unmoored Nazi warplane passed in a circle over their heads, the two men swung and ducked in alternating rhythm. There's nothing that wonderful in "Crystal Skull"—fistfights with the K.G.B. henchmen go on forever, blow after blow. And, despite the greater flexibility of digital, Spielberg isn't able to create the awed anticipation and tensions of the earlier films: the entrance-to-the-tomb scenes are pedestrian and unscary. Karen Allen turns up again, but her reunion with Ford is a sexless dud—a disappointment for older fans and probably a puzzler for people who have never seen the earlier movies. Blanchett should be the sexual aggressor here. You expect her to make a pass at LaBeouf (a trial that would test any young man), but it never happens. Reckless daring is what's missing from "Crystal Skull." The movie leaves a faint aura of depression, because you don't want to think of daring as the exclusive property of youth. There must be a way for middle-aged men to take chances and leap over chasms, but repeating themselves with less conviction isn't it. ♦

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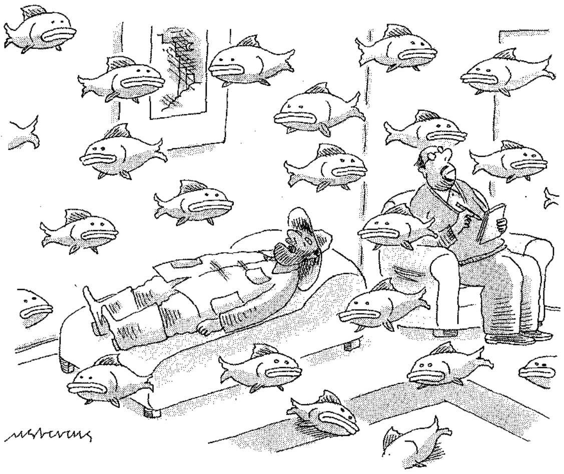
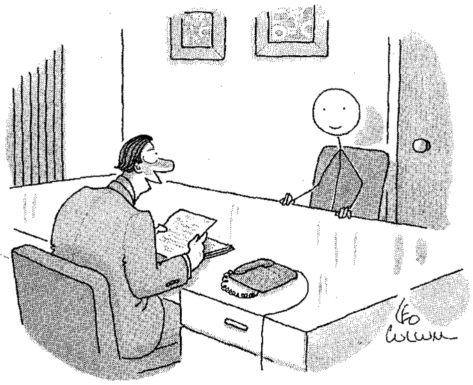
CARTOON CAPTION CONTEST

Each week, we provide a cartoon in need of a caption. You, the reader, submit a caption, we choose three finalists, and you vote for your favorite. Caption submissions for this week's cartoon, by Drew Dernavich, must be received by Sunday, June 1st. Finalists in the May 19th contest appear below; go online to vote. We will announce the winner, along with the finalists in this week's contest, in the June 23rd issue. The winner will be given a signed print of the cartoon. Any U.S. resident age eighteen or over can enter or vote. To do so, and to read the complete rules, visit www.newyorker.com/captioncontest.

THE WINNING CAPTION



"I'm haunted by the faces of my victims."
Tom Buckner, Asheville, N.C.



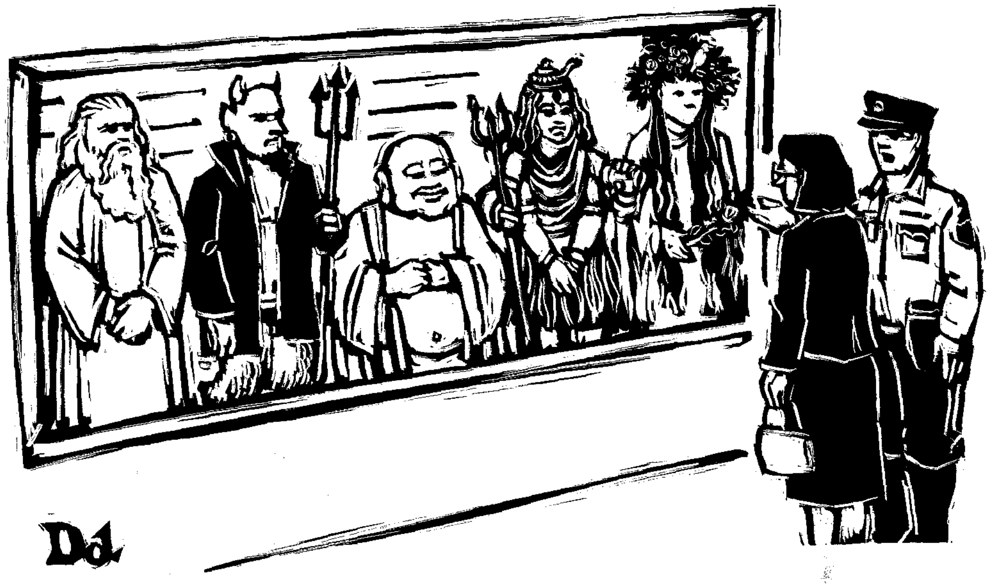
THE FINALISTS

"I'm sorry, this is Tic-Tac-Toe—applications for Hangman are down the hall."
Gavrilo Gnatovich, Tucson, Ariz.

"Besides being a stick, what is your greatest weakness?"
Roxie June, Window Rock, Ariz.

"It was a rough divorce, but she didn't get the Happy Face."
David Duty, Austin, Tex.

THIS WEEK'S CONTEST



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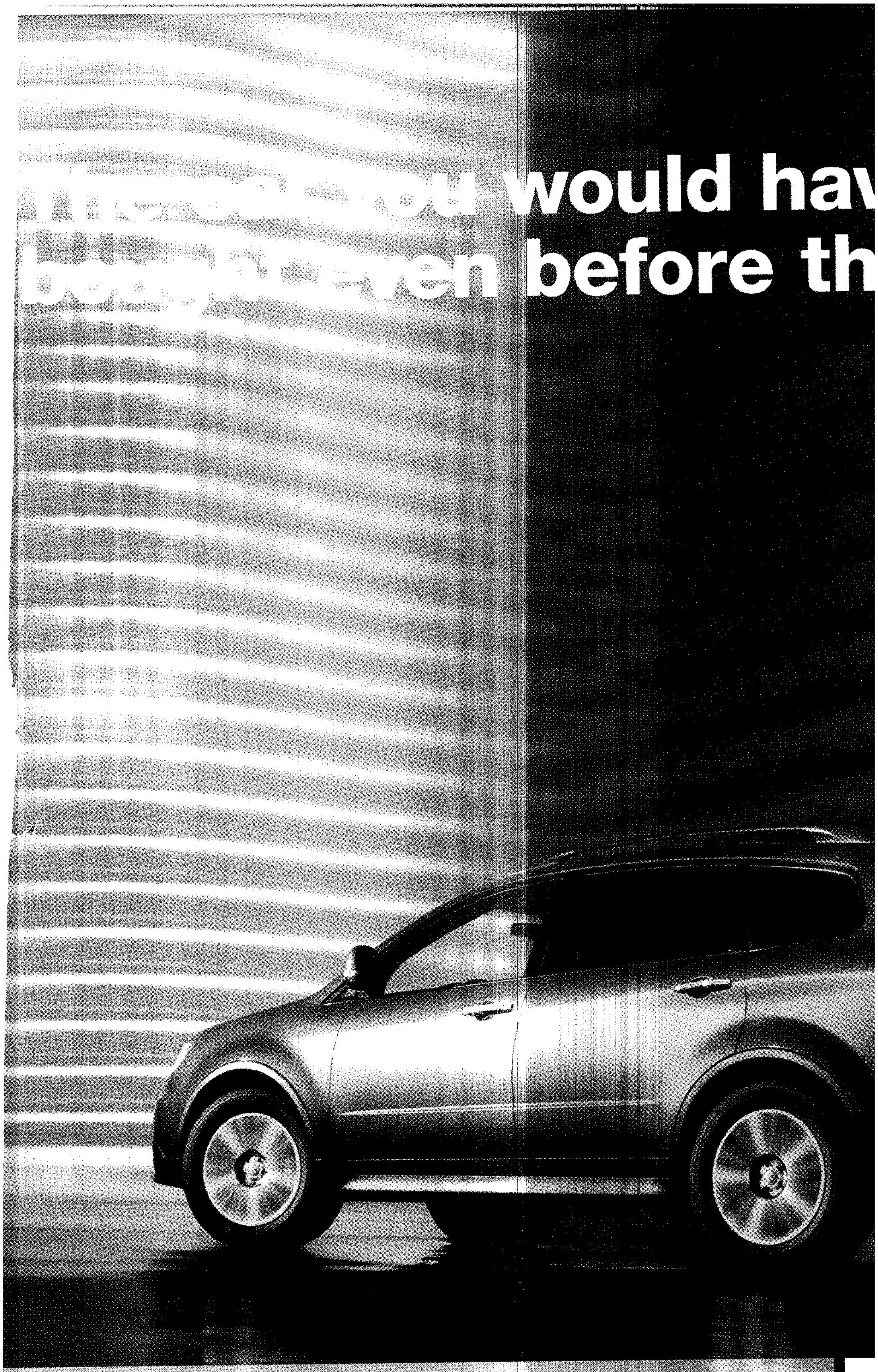
The car you would hav
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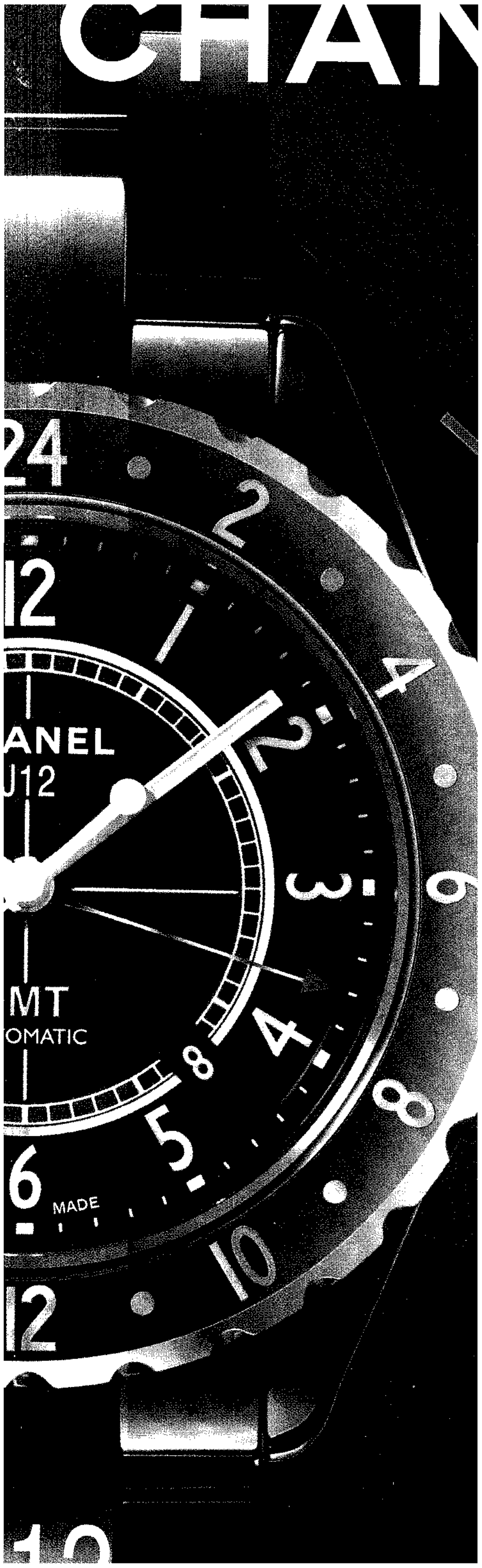
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